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COMMONWEAL

1492 REMEMBERED: the meaning of it all
Norman F. Cantor

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PAUL ELIE on Patricia Hampl
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LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM: Religious Booknotes

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CORRESPONDENCE

If R.I., why not Ala.?

Auburn, Ala.

To the Editors: Congratulations to David R. Carlin, Jr., and to the 300 *Commonweal* subscribers who propelled him to victory in the congressional primaries ["Et Cetera," October 9]. Now could you tell us how many *Commonweal* subscribers we have in Alabama and whether you think it would be enough to field a candidate.

T.M. CURRAN

From the editors: Answers: (A) 39; (B) Of course.

Out of his league

Barre, Mass.

To the Editors: As a sixty-four-year-old connoisseur of both women and baseball, I felt Richard Alleva was a tad harsh in his condemnation of the action sequences in *A League of Their Own* [September 11] and possibly too unappreciative of the verisimilitude of a picture that beautifully bridges the gap of a half-century during which a lot of values, including family ones, have got ironed out under the steamroller of economic progress and retreat. His complaint, "Repeatedly, homely women are mocked in this movie," is so far off base (not least because it seems to synonymize "mocked" and "raped"), that one wonders if Mr. A. was ready to deal with artists dealing honestly with a world of difference. I and the lady with whom I saw the film had no trouble doing that.

JAMES SULLIVAN

What I really said

Lake Tomahawk, Wis.

To the Editors: After reading William Talbot's letter ["An immeasurable gulf," Correspondence, October 9], I reread my own letter [Correspondence, June 19] with which he expressed disagreement. I tried to find where I had exalted individual freedom, or sexual indulgence, or personal interpretation. I couldn't find any such expressions or arguments.

An interpretation held in good faith by "millions of Catholics" based on what each has learned individually is hardly just a personal interpretation. At a certain point (which has surely been reached with respect to birth regulation), it becomes the *sensus fidelium*.

I espoused an understanding of how marital sex functions to bond the couple through emotional closeness. I tried to convey that sexual union within a marital commitment, supported by mutual loving, becomes much more than merely one way among many to express love, or merely an indulgence in sexual pleasure. *Humanae vitae* says that is all there is. Millions of us have learned that it can be far more essential to the husband/wife bond—the bond Paul compared to Jesus' relationship with his church. I exalted not sex, but marital bonding.

"I must warn you, he's extremely volatile."

Mr. Talbot's interpretation of my letter is a classic example of the difficulty of communicating when the gulf in understanding is not only immeasurable but unbridgeable.

MARILYN M. KRAMER

Send for the texts

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Sipe and Lamb continue to lie about me [Correspondence, September 25]. To repeat: I do NOT believe that either money or sales vindicate an author and his work; only a fool equates quantity with quality (nor does quantity preclude quality either). My denial ought to be enough. I should be given the courtesy of knowing what I believe better than Sipe and Lamb know what I believe.

I tell you what: If readers should be interested in whether Sipe and Lamb are indeed tearing words out of context—and thus raping my soul—they should write to me at NORC, the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (60637) and I'll send them copies of the *PW* article and the pertinent pages of my autobiography.

(REV.) ANDREW GREELEY

He liked it

Fort Carson, Colo.

To the Editors: A million wildly enthusiastic cheers for Bishop P. Francis Murphy. His "Let's Start Over" [September 25] is abolutely the best I've ever read on women's concerns.

(MSGR.) ROBERT J. ENNIS

The question came late

Des Moines, Iowa

To the Editors: It was the first invitation I had ever received from a bishop. I ac-

(Continued on page 43)

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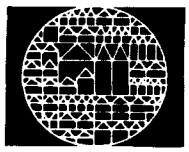

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The cry of Sudan

Q. What is the largest country in Africa? A. Sudan.

Q. What Islamic government is conducting, and concealing, a holy war against its non-Muslim peoples? A. Sudan's.

Sudan is today a landscape of bitter civil war, famine, and anguish largely unobserved by the rest of the world. The Sudanese poet J.G. Odiya describes it: "Orphans roam the land, men have lost their heads, and mercy is foreign, alien, and far away from the land of the agile gazelle." We must help mercy return.

Once a key nation in cold-war calculations, Sudan has a population of 24 million and is divided between its northern, Arab-Islamic majority and its black African, animist, and Christian southern minority. "Land of three rivers and fifty tribes, wrapped in a thirsty war" (Odiya again), Sudan reaches from Egypt and the Red Sea on Africa's Horn to the Central African Republic, bordering eight African nations all told.

Since 1983, when civil war broke out, more than 4 million Sudanese have been displaced. The famine victims of Ethiopia and, more recently, Somalia, are familiar to most Americans, but the plight of the Sudanese has been kept off the world's TV screens by the Khartoum government's calculated refusal to allow foreign observers to document what is happening.

Recent UN figures manage to tell the story nonetheless: Whereas 65 percent of the people of Ethiopia live below the UN-defined poverty line, and whereas 70 percent of Somalis do, in Sudan the figure reaches a staggering 85 percent. Nearly 40 percent of the nation's children are malnourished, and, according to USAID, the number exceeds 80 percent in many areas. A Maryknoll lay missioner, recently returned, writes this of a Southern Sudan refugee center: "The scene could have been any scene you see in documentaries on refugees...swollen bellies, spindly legs, crying children. Then, too, some who are healthier, laughing and playing with each other while awaiting their rations—an ironic reminder of the human spirit, how it tries to adapt and create some sense of normalcy even in the most abnormal and miserable of situations." According to the UN World Food Program, 7.5 million Sudanese are threatened by famine.

The famine and civil war are the bloody harvest of an amalgam of interreligious conflict, regionalism, racism, conflicting political ideologies, tribalism, and social caste. Sudan was granted independence in 1955, but civilian leadership ended, by and large, with the first of a series of military coups in 1958. In 1972, Colonel Gaffar Nimeiry agreed to grant limited autonomy to the South. But in 1983 he reneged, and, under the influence of Hassan al-Turabi, an Iranian-inspired Sunni fundamentalist, Nimeiry declared Sudan an Islamic republic, made Arabic the official language, and imposed Islamic law on the entire nation. Floggings and amputations for such crimes as theft became common. In the South, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

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was formed and a fierce war has raged ever since. The crimes of both the government and the SPLA are legion. In particular, there is a religious war being waged against non-Muslims. In January 1992, the government seized all copies of a pastoral letter of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference that criticized Khartoum's holy war. In February, the government expelled 400,000 southern refugees from the capital, driving them into the winter desert. In March, it launched a massive offensive, displacing 50,000 Nuba [non-Arab] tribesmen in the North. In the South, it captured the city of Juba, displacing 250,000 people in July, and expelling all expatriate missionaries in August in an attempt to remove any independent witnesses.

When the Vatican recently protested "the flagrant violation of human rights" in Sudan, a Khartoum official responded threateningly: "The Catholic church has become the enemy of the Sudanese government, and we know how to deal with it." Bishops have been forced to appear in the capital for questioning and church workers have been tortured and killed. In August the Sudanese bishops persuaded the bishops of East Africa to call on the Organization of African Unity to deplore the violations of human rights in Sudan, and to bring pressure on the various factions in the war for a peaceful settlement.

Here in the United States, Bread for the World and the Center of Concern, among others, pressed for the passage of The Horn of Africa Recovery and Food Security Act. It was signed into law in April 1992, and allows for the shift of U.S. foreign aid funds from military accounts for both emergency relief needs and long-term development projects. But as Sudanese Bishop Paride Taban remarked recently in New York, pressure on the Sudanese government must be generated on many fronts: "Feeding people is not enough if tomorrow they are to be slaughtered like cattle in the war. We need something more." That "more" is concerted pressure on Sudan from abroad. In Bishop Taban's view, it must come from the UN Security Council and from the United States. It is time for us to raise our voices.

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

CONFESSIONS OF A BLURBOMANIAC

One of the best things about this job—aside from the privilege of defending Cardinal Ratzinger's position in editorial debate—is paging through the book catalogues we receive from publishers. I have a fetishistic attachment to books—if I can't read it at least I can hold it in my sweaty little palms for a minute—and letting me order books "for review" is a little like letting Ronald Reagan order weapons systems or Elizabeth Taylor husbands or Ross Perot rescue missions. I will not be denied.

Leafing through the catalogues can also be entertaining, especially the brief synopses of the latest novels with their angst-ridden, sexually tormented protagonists. I'm as much for angst and sexual torment as the next guy, but squeezing these status markers into a paragraph or two makes for a certain lack of subtlety when appealing to the prospective buyer's basest instincts. Doubtless these précis are composed by overworked, underpaid, and sexually harassed minions, and the authors should not be held strictly accountable. Indeed, these blurbs are a venerable genre, and when they are accompanied by the usual small, black-and-white picture of the author looking both ethereal and as if she'd been sucking on a lemon the total impression induces merriment. The biographical tags strain for similar effects, and usually read something like, "Alexander Blaze, a native Oklahoman, studied at Bennington and the Sorbornne, and now lives in New York." Or they live in New York and London, or New York and Istanbul, or New York and Putney, Vermont. Of course I'm jealous. I live in New York and Hooterville, Connecticut, but I haven't written a novel.

Below I have excerpted *actual* book blurbs from a number of recent publishers' catalogues. I hope you enjoy them. In the interest of not arousing the enmity of the authors of the books described I have made up alternative titles to suit each blurb. This is meant to be mischievous, and I trust that faithful *Commonweal* readers will understand the controversies and cast of characters to which I gently allude in these fake titles.

"Surrounded by a circle of writers and radical thinkers, the young utopians hope to launch a revolutionary way of living. Over the year we see their ideal of personal and political liberation shattered...." (*Dan and Marilyn Quayle: The Untold Story.*)

"It is to this green, summery, weekendish Atlantic outpost that the [female protagonist]...come[s] in search of relief from the cruelties of Manhattan. Enter a well-remembered figure from her past....the world's most heartbreaking man." (*Mario Says, "No"—Again.*)

"A stunning novel, brimming with romance and political intrigue...a fire storm then ensues, fueled by the enmity that has always raged between the town's leading families....at its vortex are the protagonists." (*Lies! Lies! Lies! A Cardinal Blackie Ryan Novel.*) (Just kidding! kidding! kidding!)

A "thinking reader's Jackie Collins....Only an insider could bring to life the dazzling and treacherous high-stakes players of New York, Downing Street, and Capitol Hill...an explosive mix of sex, violence, and ruthless ambition that brilliantly captures the behind-the-scenes world of today's power elite." (*Now It Can Be Told: The Real* Commonweal *Story.*)

"From flop pads in New York's East Village to the Bhagwan Rajneesh's sex commune in India, from Provincetown to Santa Cruz, he tries to recapture contentment, and invariably finds its opposite." (*Frank McConnell: A Media Critic's Life.*)

"Which all adds up to a subtle and unnerving inquiry into one marriage's descent into crime and fear...an acute and moving portrait of what can happen when a couple become tired of the life they share and jump at the first chance for change, no matter what the price—deceit, venality, adultery, violence." (*The*

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"...and in spite of constant rumor and relentless speculation of the tabloid press, the prince and princess lived happily ever after."

Baumanns at Home.)

"An African-American temptress who dabbles in voodoo and can make herself invisible; a dwarfish, shotgun-toting troglodyte who trains killer dogs, and a pouting personal assistant who moonlights as a sex slave....Replete with a live body packed in a coffin, a sinister cave with a secret entrance, and the most excruciating doctor's visit ever recorded." (*What Bishops Talk About When They Talk About Women.*)

"Fixed in a landscape as strange and as familiar as today's headlines, [the novel] reveals a world...in which certainty and trust increasingly give way to ambiguity and paranoia...gripping, mysterious, resonant—a novel in which the intractable conflict between oppressor and the oppressed is mirrored by one man and one woman's attempt to connect." (*You're Next: My Life Behind the Cheese Counter at Zabar's.*)

"Determined to discover the reason for [his mentor's suicide], Andrew travels to Jerusalem, where a highly respected Israeli archaeologist shows him the skeleton of a crucified man. On its skull are indentations that might have been made by a crown of thorns, and between its ribs is a mark apparently made by a spear." (*Does Gore Vidal Know Something We Don't? See* Irving Malin, page 38.)

Look for our new catalogue in the spring, including the shocking new releases, *John Garvey Votes, Strong Men Faint,* and *Richard Alleva's Camera Angles I Might Have Missed.*

PAUL BAUMANN

A HISTORIAN WHO MADE HISTORY

JOHN TRACY ELLIS, R.I.P.

A WELL-ORDERED LIFE

Some time ago, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis—to remind me ever so gently of my own mortality—gave me, for insertion into my breviary, a Xerox copy of a prayer which he told me he had been saying every day for several months. Characteristically, he had identified the printed source of the prayer by chapter, verse, page number, date of publication, etc., as he had taught his students to do, even in routine term papers, during his long and distinguished career in the classroom at The Catholic University of America and, for a time, at the University of San Francisco. It is a prayer for a happy (and, in his case, a speedy) death. The prayer, which Saint Bede is reported to have said as he was dying, reads as follows:

> Now is the time, if it be my Maker's will, for me to be set free from this flesh and to come to him who fashioned me from nothing when as yet I was not. I have lived a long time and my merciful judge has ordered my life well. The time of my delivery is at hand for my soul longs to see Christ my king in his glory.

All of Ellis's friends knew, of course, that for several months he had been praying that, God willing, he might be permitted to die as soon as possible. He felt that the time of his delivery was at hand, and his soul longed to see Christ his king in his glory. His prayer was mercifully answered at 6:00 A.M. on Friday, October 16, when he peacefully went to the Lord. Like Saint Bede, he had lived a long life—eighty-seven years, to be exact—and could say in all humility that his merciful judge had ordered his life well.

Ellis's entire adult life, both before and after his ordination to the priesthood in 1938, was devoted almost exclusively to the study and teaching of church history. He was the supportive mentor of numerous aspiring historians, lay and clerical, who received their professional start under his generous guidance and wise direction and, without exception, remained his devoted friends for life.

It will be appropriate, then, to say a word at the outset about Ellis's approach to history. He was guided always by what Pope Leo XIII said with reference to historians on the opening of the Vatican Archives: "The first law of history is not to dare to utter falsehood; the second, not to fear to speak the truth."

It would be frivolous, of course, to suggest that these few words—which Ellis himself helped to make familiar to all of us by dint of constant repetition—adequately summarize his contribution to American Catholicism during the past fifty-odd years. At the very least, however, they bring to mind the one quality above all others that many would undoubtedly single out as his distinctive trademark—the quality of intellectual honesty which, as Leo described it, is both a negative and a positive virtue. In short, Ellis never dared to utter falsehood and, even more to his credit, never feared to speak the truth.

It might be argued, of course, that that is the least that one could expect and demand of any historian worthy of the name and that it really tells us very little, if anything, about Ellis's distinctive contribution to American Catholicism as compared, for example, to the contribution made by his confreres in the field of church history or by his counterparts in other scholarly disciplines or pastoral occupations. The point is well taken. Yet, without making comparisons—least of all odious comparisons—I would argue that, given the ecclesiastical and cultural climate in which he had to function during the middle years of his priesthood, and given the fact that in his later years he was an outspoken and rather controversial commentator on the present state of American Catholicism and not merely a chron-

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icler of our Catholic past, his intellectual honesty was almost *sui generis* and had a significant impact on the life of the church in this country.

Offhand I can think of more than a few people in high places who, thirty of forty years ago, would not have agreed with me in this regard. But, as Ellis and his professional peers are wont to remind us, time has a way of putting things in focus and perspective. Recall if you will, in this connection, the angry reaction on the part of certain ecclesiastics to Ellis's articles and speeches during the fifties on the failure of American Catholicism to encourage and to nurture intellectual excellence. The fact that his frank but reasoned treatment of this subject created such a furor, coupled with the fact that an equally frank discussion of a comparably delicate problem in 1992 would hardly cause a ripple, is one indication of how far we have come *post* if not *propter* Vatican II.

I do not mean to suggest that intellectual honesty of the kind that Ellis consistently exemplified is everywhere revered or honored in today's church. But surely things are better in this regard than they were when he first began to speak out in public on a wide range of previously unmentionable subjects or, as his critics at the time might have put it, when he first began to wash some of our dirty linen in public. If we are more sophisticated and more relaxed in this respect than we used to be, and if we have developed a certain sense of cultural maturity in the American Catholic community, much of the credit belongs to Ellis. For this reason, among many others—including his willingness to pay a certain price for his convictions—we honor his memory with gratitude.

Up to this point I have been talking specifically about Ellis's distinctive contribution as a controversial commentator on the state of American Catholicism or, if you will, his contribution as an effective publicist or pamphleteer. Others are much better qualified than I am to speak about his more lasting contribution as a productive scholar—a truly professional scholar and author—in the field of American Catholic church history. Speaking as an amateur, I would simply say, in this connection, that the church in the United States owes a great debt to Ellis and to his colleagues in the field of church history for having kept alive a sense of history among their fellow-Catholics during the darkest days of what many have described as the era of nonhistorical orthodoxy. One of Ellis's younger colleagues in the field of American church history, Eric Cochrane, in urging his fellow-historians to redouble their efforts to implant a sense of history among American Catholics, indicated some years ago why this work is so important. Our neglect of history, he complained, has

> permitted Catholics in general to attribute infallibility to doctrinal pronouncements which, however theologically impeccable, are utterly devoid of specific references to concrete historical situations; and it has enabled them to ignore, or bury in platitudes and abstract formulae [some of the] pressing problems of their own time....It has encouraged American Catholics in particular to ignore their own specific experience and simply to import acritically the answers to their theological questions from the very different environment of Western Europe. It has impeded the progress of ecumenical dialogue. And it has left any number of so-called "Progressive Catholics"—from Pentecostals and commune members to liturgical reformers and social activists—bereft of the experience accumulated over two millennia by such of our forerunners as Teresa of Avila, Benedict of Nursia, Philip Neri, and Joseph of Calasanz.

We are indebted to Ellis for all that he did to help the church in the United States redress the balance in this regard.

I have said that many of us would undoubtedly single out intellectual honesty as Ellis's distinctive trademark. And so it was, in my opinion. I should like to add, in a more personal vein, that his professional work as a historian and as a scholarly journalist was at all times a very priestly work. What the Italian historian, Professor Giuseppe Alberigo, has said with reference to historians in general is eminently true of Ellis: "All historical research conducted with scientific rigor is a spiritual adventure; and research into the history of the church is also a religious experience."

In Ellis's case, it was precisely that—a spiritual adventure and a religious experience or, in the words of Professor Cochrane, "a holy occupation."

The late Belgian theologian and spiritual writer Pierre Charles made this point many years ago in Teilhardian language that would have resonated with Ellis. Father Charles rejected the notion that a good intention on the part of a scholar was enough to integrate his research with his religious values. "If," he said in one of his published prayers, "Truth is not an abstraction; if it is a Person and my Redeemer, then quite independently from the intention, knowledge is in itself good, even for a mortal man, and to know is to build up Truth and therefore to build up Christ among men....Wherever Truth is spoken we stammer something of the Person of the Word who is the Truth...."

If I understand what Ellis was saying in some of his more recent interviews (and he was forever being interviewed until his final illness), I have the impression that, like many of the rest of us, he was yearning for a moratorium on strife and contestation in civil society as well as in the life of the church—yearning for a greater measure of charity, civility, and peace. Who can blame him for entertaining the prayerful hope that this might come to pass? And yet, thanks to his sense of history, he knew better than most of us that our hoped-for second spring, like the one that his favorite author, John Henry Newman, envisioned for England in the nineteenth century, is likely to be "an uncertain, anxious time of hope and fear, of

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joy and suffering, of bright promise and budding hopes, yet withal of keen blasts, and cold showers, and storms." He was not discouraged, however, by this somber prospect. To the contrary, he would undoubtedly have agreed with Newman that "unbelief is in some shape unavoidable in an age of intellect and in a world like this.... (and that) it is one great advantage of an age in which unbelief speaks out, that faith can speak out too; that, if falsehood assails truth, truth can assail falsehood."

I recall, in this connection, Ellis's telling me a few years ago that, despite his anxious concern about the future of the church and the future of our society, he fully agreed with Saint Augustine who cautioned the faithful of his own time, fifteen hundred years ago, not to indulge in pessimism or romantic nostalgia:

> So we must not grumble, for as the Apostle says: "Some of them murmured and were destroyed by serpents." Is there any affliction now endured by mankind that was not endured by our fathers before us? What sufferings of ours even bear comparison with what we know of their sufferings? And yet you hear people complaining about this present day and age because things were so much better in former times. I wonder what would happen if they could be taken back to the days of their ancestors—would we not still hear them complaining? You may think past ages were good, but it is only because you are not living in them.

When I quoted this text to Ellis, not too long before he died, he emphatically—and not with great good cheer—seconded Augustine.

I quoted Newman above as having said that in our age "truth can assail falsehood." The word "assail," as used in this context, would be too aggressive if applied to a man of Ellis's delicate sensibilities. Whatever of that, we honor him as a priestly scholar who, in the spirit of Newman, spent his entire priesthood not assailing, but irenically countering unbelief with faith and falsehood with truth or, in the words of Saint Paul, "Doing the truth in charity."

He was a man of exquisite courtesy, the quintessential but relaxed and affable gentleman, a good listener, a delightful conversationalist and *raconteur*, an ecumenist before his time, a strong supporter of women's rights and of lay initiative and leadership in the church, and, last but not least, a man of profound and persevering prayer.

Ellis seldom if ever concluded an address or a homily without quoting his beloved Newman. As we fondly bid him farewell, then, it will be fitting to say with Newman: "May God support us all the day long 'till shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in his mercy, may he give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last."

We thank God that Ellis has found that holy rest and that everlasting peace.

GEORGE G. HIGGINS

Msgr. George G. Higgins of The Catholic University of America was a personal friend of John Tracy Ellis for more than fifty years.

'WORLD BOOK' AT SEVENTY-FIVE

GO LOOK IT UP

THRUSH, TITMOUSE & PAUL TILLICH

I've been engrossed in the *World Book*s since they arrived UPS last week, though more out of nostalgia than a need for information. Even this new seventy-fifth anniversary edition reads like a wonderful old scrapbook, something I've come across in an attic somewhere.

Twice already they've answered the kind of dinner table questions we got them for: How and when did house cats come to America? (With the Pilgrims.) And how big was the *Spirit of St. Louis*? (Only 23 feet, 8 inches long.) For the next ten years we want to be able to say "go look it up" and have the kids racing to the shelves, grabbing a volume, and falling on the living room carpet, maps and transparencies cracked open.

The facts come in handy for grown-ups like me, too, since I tend to be a little fuzzy and intuitive. Knowing the length of the *Spirit of St. Louis* makes me feel solider.

But so far I've been reading for memories, and the past I'm recalling is my own. Or not so much my past as my past image of the world, of knowledge, and of things. The print today is smaller than in the 1963 edition we had when I was growing up—a white and blue set, in the hallway by the bathroom, the only books in the house. There's more information now, more scientific advances and wars to include. More women are mentioned, more blacks. Most of the astronauts in the pictures are captioned without name. They're just "astronauts," not the five-star heroes I remember from the '63 set.

But it's all more or less still there: the glossy pages and the color drawings, the calm, detached, sixth-grade, social-studies-teacher voice patiently describing the hierarchy of dogs, or the evolution of engines, and the structure of bicameral legislatures. An odor of dusty libraries and chemistry labs and science fairs and high-school health assemblies comes off the books, and even of the green cut lawns and neat curbs of suburban America. Even now, all the photographs of people and places and processes look as if they were taken in the fifties somewhere in Ohio. A man drives a car. A woman turns on a stove. A student lifts up a petrie dish—everyone has just had a haircut, everyone is wearing new clothes. Even the platypuses and sweet peas look posed and stiff.

Just taking a volume down and paging through it, as I used to as a kid, reading what interests me, has that soothing effect of walking through a museum or gallery. It's silent. You're wandering along quietly, stopping to look at this and at that, light reflecting off the glass cases, voices murmuring in the distance, the echo of footsteps. Hours pass before you look up and notice it's lunch time. There's an exquisite tenuousness, a thinness, about the quality of your attention. Your interest in any one thing is never passionate—nothing registers fully or loud-

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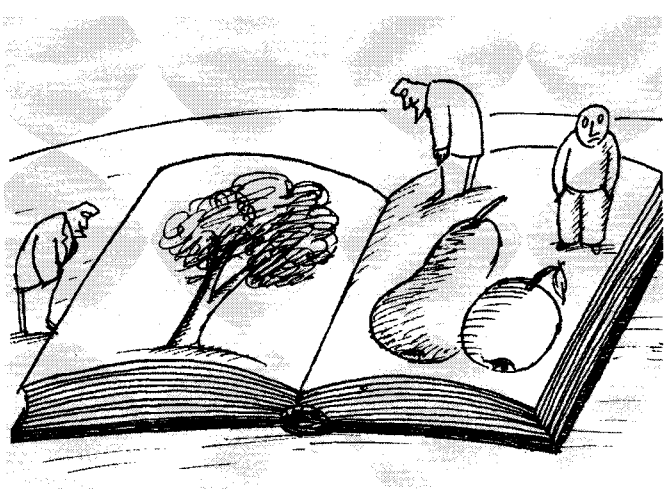
ly—and yet your concentration holds over long stretches of time, and dozens of subjects. It's as if your heart has slowed, your temperature dropped.

On one level what I appreciate about the *World Book* is its dullness. My life is chaotic and exciting and troubling enough already, and so I'm grateful for the books' monotonous clarity, their flatness. No one cries, bleeds, frets, struggles, despairs in the *World Book*. The helter skelter of life has been nominalized, made into an abstract subject ("Crying," "The Circulatory System," "Emotional Disorder"), and there is comfort in that. In the article on "War," for example, all the major blood baths of history are simply tics on a shaded time line, progressive examples of political theory. "Most countries fear the possibility of attack and maintain armed forces to defend themselves. Sometimes this fear may be directed toward a particular country. In that case a nation may decide to choose its own time and strike the first blow." Or "When a nation makes war, its government always states the **reasons** for the war. This is necessary if the people are to be united in the war effort. But the reasons given for a war need not be the same as its **causes**." It's the boldface that calms me, the stating of the obvious, and the general absence of subordination.

A graph titled "Wars Involving the United States" has three columns, "Wars," "U.S. Military Deaths," and "U.S. War Costs," from which I learn that the Vietnam War cost 58,000 lives and $150,000,000,000 while World War II cost 405,399 lives and $263,259,000,000. I don't mean to imply that the author of this article is without horror at the thought of the lost lives represented by the zeroes. Real people write the *World Book*, their names in tiny print at the end of each piece, and I believe that taken individually they spend just as many sleepless nights and rejoice at just as many sunrises as I do. It's the conventions of encyclopedia article-writing that factor out those human elements. Deliberately. And I'm glad. I take the voice as artificial. I don't consider it in any important sense true (only factual). But I'm soothed by it anyway—soothed because it's unreal, because it's finally fantasy, in much the way I'm soothed by the conventions of children's stories, fairy tales, and myths. In the *World Book* life is made to look like history, and often that's a therapeutic, distancing illusion.



Several colored illustrations and graphs accompany the article on "Environmental Pollution": minimalist sun, straight blue lines for rain, little Monopoly-style buildings and cars, then arrows moving from one level to another to indicate the flow of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides from cars and planes, branching out into a pale *World Book* sky, where they generate smog and dissipate the ozone layer. The arrows of another illustration indicate the direction and effect of treated sewage, untreated sewage, agricultural drainage, industrial waste, and heated water. "Our desire for convenience is another cause of pollution," we are told. "Many synthetic materials that pollute the environment were developed to save people time, work, or money. With effort, some of the pollution from these materials could be eliminated. But, just as prevention of pollution is often considered too expensive, it is often considered too inconvenient."

I like having a place to go for terms like hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides, which I can never keep straight, but what's really encouraging about the *World Book* is its form, its voice, how it contradicts and dampens the content, transcending the world's true chaos. It's a voice that lulls you into forgetting the stupidity and avarice of your neighbors, your own anger and anxiety, the insolubility of the problems we all face, the tragedy of a natural world destroyed. It even whispers, in its obviousness, its avuncular directness, of competence; hints that the problems are actually manageable, something that in our life away from the *World Book*, in the world itself, we don't believe for a minute.

This is the *Reader's Digest*, *Good Housekeeping*, North Hill Library life I aspired to when I was a boy, or that part of me did—the good kid part of me, the Boy Scout, the Associated Student Body representative. I longed for citizenship and expertise in a world I thought of as one big bicameral legislature, where all the representatives show up on time and sit in their assigned places and make laws that help people cook and drive cars and perform experiments in straight-edged, cinder block buildings forevermore. Words like "democracy" and "raw material" had real resonance for me then, were conjuring words. I'd take down a volume, and lie down on the green living room shag and look for the presidents—Taylor, Tyler, Harrison, Harding, Jefferson, Kennedy—dreaming of my own steady progress toward glory, stage by stage, narrating my own biography in the *World Book* voice: "Chris Anderson was born in Colville, Washington, and raised in Spokane, the oldest of three sons...."

I'd take down P and fantasize about planes, imagining cockpits and dials and the blurring sky, imagining more the adulation of assembled friends and strangers on the ground as I scrambled out and posed beside the fuselage, smiling, helmet cradled in my arm. I'd find the chart listing all the major colleges and universities in America, pictures showing campuses and classrooms, and spend long minutes comforting myself with how much I would one day know, the Ph.D.'s I would hold, the obscure books I would write.

My solar energy project took first prize at the Madison Elementary Science Fair, despite the fact that it didn't actual-

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ly work. It won because I was immersed in the world of the *World Book* and could speak in its confident rhythms. Dad and I had built a little triangular box, a half square, with a window on the flat open side and two thermometers, one inside and one out, the idea being to capture the sun, make it bounce around inside the house—the Greenhouse effect harnessed. Why it didn't work I'm still not sure, though I remember frantically painting the inside black and doing some research on the capacity of rocks and of water to retain heat. Mostly I just wanted to sound as if I knew something, play that part, and my charts and reports were first-class, lots of flat arrows branching out in stages from one paragraph to another, appropriate phrases in boldface.

But orderliness is only the first level, and it's finally illusory. What's even more pleasing and profound about the *World Book*, I think, is that it's organized alphabetically. Individual articles make claims of synthesis, and the set as a whole aspires to the presentation of general knowledge, a pretty big ambition. But on a level deeper than that, and finally at odds with it, in the juxtapositions the alphabet requires, is a very different vision of the world, undiscriminating, democratic, and delighting. The truest world of the *World Book* is the one you glimpse reading a volume front to back.

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) was the wife of King Louis VII of France and later of King Henry II of England. The elecampane is a coarse perennial plant closely related to asters, growing as a roadside weed in parts of the United States and Canada. Elephants have no sweat glands, ridding their bodies of excess heat by flapping their ears or spraying water on themselves. Elevator—Elf—Sir Edward Elgar—T.S. Eliot—Elk—Ellipse. The American Elm, spreading out like an umbrella against a blue sky. Elohim, the Hebrew word that means gods, a god, or God.

Fact follows fact, object follows object, each entry unashamed and unapologetic, without irony, everything safe and available, equally interesting, worthy of attention, and you keep turning the pages, absorbed, humming to yourself. The Who (one of the most popular British rock groups in history) is followed by Wichita (the largest city in Kansas) is followed by Wild Carrot, Wilson Cloud Chamber, Winch, Wind Surfing, Women's Movements, Stevie Wonder, Wood, the names and labels like accidental poetry. You can pull out any entry and subordinate it to any argument, use any fact for any larger purpose, political or personal; but when you read a volume as a book, assume the sequence as a structure, a deeper, more innocent wholeness emerges. This is the world undifferentiated, prior to specialization and use. This is things the way they are, a jumble of shapes and forms and sensations, nothing more important than anything else, an array of objects all ends in themselves. This is the world as a child first knows it, despite the Latin names and the assigning of species, just rocks and trees and birds and things, seen with a child's detached and thoughtless pleasure.

Even here the encyclopedia is biased, of course. Its preference is clearly for the physical. Thrush and Titmouse merit as much space as Paul Tillich and Dylan Thomas, though not nearly as much as Tire or Tin or Texas. Montaigne takes up far less space than Montana. But that's part of the point, and the pleasure. You can go elsewhere for literary history, and you can simply look into your own head for a record of the chaos and complexity of ideas. You go to the *World Book* to put ideas back where they belong, back in perspective, "Existentialism" no bigger than "Eggplant," much smaller than "Electricity." The world we're all finally nostalgic for is the world prior to our own persistent, tiresome ideas of it, prior to our own urgent involvements and needs. Just the world. There. Present. Intrinsically interesting.

CHRIS ANDERSON

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OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

A SCHOOL FOR THE ELECTED

GOVERNANCE 101

A change is in the making which may affect many people more closely than a change in the presidency. That is the forthcoming change in the Congress—especially that in the House of Representatives. There will be more blacks in this Congress, more Hispanics, more women. There will be fewer congressmen and women from the Northeast and from the Plains states, for example, than from the South and the Southwest. Important as this change is, most of the voting public knows little about it—how it came about, how it will affect them. Everybody is willing to bash Congress; only lobbyists seem willing to study it. Change is imminent for several reasons.

First, fifty-two congressman have retired, some because of age, some out of sheer frustration, and a few out of fear of voter backlash. Second, the House, once fondly dubbed "The People's Branch" by the famed, late Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, will have representatives from nineteen new districts. Redistricting mandated by the Constitution occurs every ten years as a result of the census. It was originally meant to reflect population change, to make sure that all citizens had equal representation. The population of the country as a whole is divided by 435 to determine the number of people that should constitute a district. The states then establish the boundaries of the districts in order to give representation to the required number of people. There has always been a certain amount of juggling

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things about in drawing district lines—gerrymandering as it is called—to gain some partisan advantage.

This year, however, a new element was injected into the establishment of districting boundaries. A court decision made it necessary to draw lines giving a district to a concentration of minorities wherever they are found. Thus, Congressman Stephen Solarz of New York, for example, found that he had to run in a district with a majority of Hispanics who rejected him in the primary. North Carolina's original redistricting plan was turned down and replaced by one creating a long skinny district nicknamed the Interstate 81 district whose boundaries take in pockets of blacks living along the highway. It is said that in order to make the connections, portions of the district are no wider than the highway itself.

Obviously this second change is meant to treat minorities justly and give them adequate representation. But some feminists object to the procedure. They say that as 52 percent of the population they are certainly underrepresented and clearly cannot be sorted out geographically. Blacks, too, are split in their view of the process. Some see it as condemning them to a minority status for the next fifty years and preventing "mainstreaming."

Long-time Congress watchers are concerned that the redistricting process described above will only intensify what they see as the Balkanization of the House. After World War II when a new generation came to Congress any division rested on issues. The primary differences between Democrats and Republicans in the House were party-issue differences, and within the parties there was an occasional division between liberals and conservatives. Now there are many special interest concerns, represented in some cases by formalized caucuses such as the Sunbelt Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, the Caucus on Women's Issues, even the Arts Caucus, which often take precedence over party affiliation.

Fortunately the new congressperson is not plunged into this complicated situation unaided. In recent decades a unifying and empowering force known as the New Member Orientation Program has developed. It is organized across party lines to clarify the overriding purpose of the Congress to provide for the general welfare of the nation.

In 1981 the Committee on House Administration inherited the responsibility for the coordination of the program from the Select Committee on Congressional Operations. The program is presented in four parts, two weeks in length. The initial part of the program consists of a bipartisan administrative briefing. This briefing addresses such subjects as congressional ethics, legal issues pertinent to congressional service, the federal election laws as they relate to Congress, and the establishment and management of a congressional office.

The next part of the program is the leadership orientation, presented on a partisan basis. The new congresspersons are briefed on parliamentary procedures, floor procedures, and the process of assignment to committees.

The third part of the program consists of the early organizational meetings of the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference, which are attended by all members, both newly elected and returning. The Democrats and Republicans meet separately to nominate candidates for Speaker, to elect the leaders of their caucus or conference, and to select their members to serve on the various committees of the House. They entertain motions to amend the rules of the House, as well as the rules of the caucus or conference. And they discuss legislative priorities.

Finally there is an issues seminar—perhaps the most popular part of the program—presented by the Committee on House Administration in cooperation with the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Presentations are made by experts from across the political spectrum drawn from academia, government, and the private sector. They deal with the budget, health care, environmental policy, our trade policy, education, agriculture, AIDS, the state of our cities, and other major issues. We can hope that this process broadens a congressperson's outlook beyond the narrow concerns of his or her constituency. We know that, like freshmen in college sharing a new experience, the neophytes in this seminar can form life-long friendships—often across party lines—and enduring alliances for the work ahead. □

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THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

1492 & ALL THAT

NORMAN F. CANTOR

It is well known that three important events happened in the year 1492: the fall of Granada, the last Moslem territory in the Iberian peninsula, to the Spanish Latin Christian monarchy; the expulsion of the professing members of the Jewish religious community; and the first transatlantic voyage of Christopher Columbus. The deadline for exodus of the Jews and the beginning of the Columbian voyage occurred only one day apart. Granada fell half a year earlier. Five hundred years later it is worth contemplating the historical significance of these events and their possible meaning.

The Moslems—an ethnically mixed group of Arabs, various Near Eastern peoples, and North African Berbers—conquered most of Iberia in 711 with help from the Jewish population, who for half a century had been experiencing severe persecution by the Spanish Visigothic kings at the behest of Catholic bishops. Between 900 and about 1125 Moslem Spain flourished intellectually and economically, perhaps more remarkably than any other segment of the vast Moslem world that stretched from the Atlantic to India. It was an extremely diversified society ethnically and religiously, under the firm control of Arabic princes and united culturally by the Arabic language and by philosophic and scientific learning. Then after the renewed invasion of the Iberian peninsula by Berber tribes from the North African Magrib, who were fundamentalist in religion and race-conscious, internal deterioration of Moslem Spain set in during the late twelfth century.

The Christian princes in the north of the peninsula had been pursuing a *reconquista*—a military crusade to push the Moslems back—since the early eleventh century. In 1212 the Arab armies suffered as decisive a defeat as the Visigothic Christians had experienced in 711, and by 1265 of fabled Andulasia only Granada, in the deep south, remained in Moslem hands. It fell to the Spanish monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

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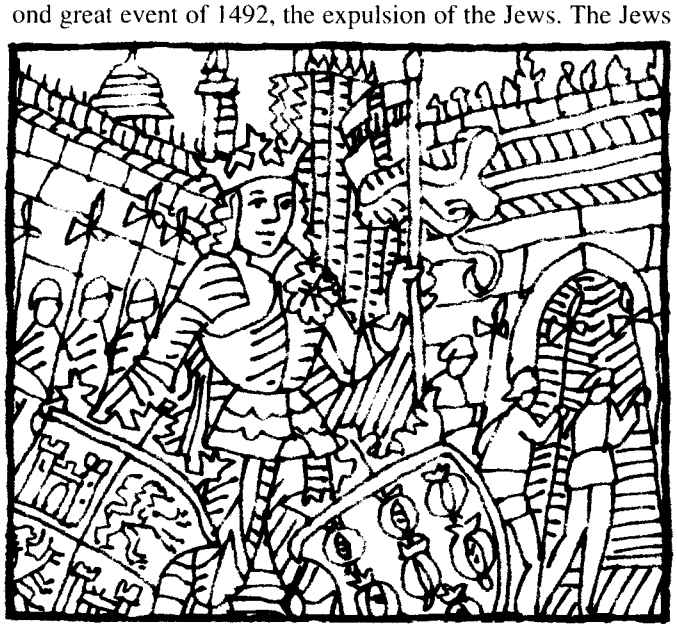
The conquest of Granada was the first important event of 1492.

The Jewish population of Sefarad (Iberia) had flourished culturally under Moslem rule until the fundamentalist reaction after 1100. The greatest works of Jewish philosophy and theology produced in the Jewish Diaspora since Alexandria in the first century A.D., and the most impressive corpus of Jewish poetry, some written in Arabic and some in Hebrew, between the writing of the Hebrew Scripture and the late nineteenth century, were the products of Moslem Spain. Jews became important ministers of finance and ambassadors for Moslem rulers. But even before the decisive Christian victory in 1212 there was a northward movement of the Jews into the expanding Christian kingdoms. The Moslems under Magrib rulers had become intolerant and their kingdoms unstable. The Christian rulers, in spite of contrary advice from the clergy, were highly tolerant of the Jews because they wanted their capital investment, their banking and commercial skills, and like the Moslem rulers before 1100 they employed aristocratic and learned Jews in high administrative positions.

This situation changed in the fourteenth century with the second great event of 1492, the expulsion of the Jews. The Jews



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of Spain and Portugal in the late fourteenth century—characteristically in the medieval world and still perhaps today—were polarized, on the one side, into a mass of artisans and small shopkeepers and, on the other side, an elite of wealthy businessmen, courtiers, scholars, and rabbis who married within these prominent families to form a closed caste. Increasingly, the rich Jews, even the scholars among them, lost enthusiasm for traditional doctrines and observances. Rabbinical court records of the fourteenth century show a Jewish propensity to adapt the lifestyle of Moslem society. Among the Sefardim polygamy, concubinage, adultery, and wife-beating were common. Disenchanted by rationalistic philosophy and science after 1250, the Sefardi elite were intellectually attracted to the Kabbalah which is usually defined as Jewish "mysticism," but which also involved Gnostic dualism, astrology, magic, and demonology. Between 1391 and 1420 there were Christian physical attacks upon Jews on religious grounds, some of them spontaneous mob assaults, some organized attacks led by popular church leaders such as Saint Vincent Ferrer.

As a result of these persecutions as well as a decline of enthusiasm for traditional (Talmudic) Judaism, by the second quarter of the fifteenth century more than half of the Jewish elite and an unknown proportion of the Jewish masses—at least 100,000 people—had converted to Christianity. These included great merchants, government officials, and rabbinical scholars. Some of the latter advanced to important roles in the clergy. A prominent fifteenth-century bishop of Burgos in Castile, Pablo de Santa Maria, was a former rabbi, and his son became a bishop as well.

The Spanish laity who had been jealous of the Jews because of their favorable economic and political positions were anguished to see the Jews, with their civil disabilities alleviated, now prospering even more as New Christians. The response was twofold: the idea was advanced that membership in the leadership ranks of the Iberian community demanded "purity of blood" as well as religious correctness. Secondly, the New Christians were charged with being crypto-Jews (*Marranos*, pigs) who were secretly practicing their religion (observing the Saturday Sabbath, for example) and were therefore the worst kind of heretics and betrayers of Christ who ought to be pursued by the religious court of the Inquisition.

In 1480, Pope Sixtus IV reluctantly authorized the establishment of an Inquisition in Spain to be directly under the control of the Spanish crown. There were two special motives involved in establishing the Spanish Inquisition. First, it was an instrument of centralizing royal power against the nobility, of whom the New Christian (converted Jewish) elite was an important segment. The state-controlled Inquisition was a way of attacking the wealth, autonomy, and self-confidence of the nobility, among whom by the sixteenth century, as a result of conversion and intermarriage, about a third was at least part ethnically Jewish. Second, the Inquisition in Spain in the late fifteenth century, like the Inquisition in Southern France in the thirteenth, involved a fratricidal conflict within the Jewish population itself—between the Jewish converts to Christianity and those who had remained loyal to the old faith. In the later Middle Ages, Jewish converts to Christianity condemned their former faith in public disputations with rabbis. After 1480 clergy from New Christian families were prominent among the inquisitors in the first generation of the Inquisition (as they had also been, though proportionately and numerically less so, among the inquisitors in France in the early thirteenth century). Again the Jews had split and were devouring each other while the Christian state and the gentile clergy urged them on. King Ferdinand, the most determined advocate of the Inquisition, had a Jewish grandmother.

The number of people actually executed by the Inquisition in its whole history down to 1700 was relatively modest. We are not at all dealing with a Nazi Holocaust. After all, the inquisitors didn't want in theory to kill anyone who sincerely confessed to being a crypto-Jew, accepted a punishment which could be light (public confession) or heavy (confiscation of property), and were not again convicted of being *Marranos*. No one would claim that the Spanish Inquisition was distinguished by sensitivity to civil liberties. It used torture to obtain evidence and it did not reveal to defendants the names of their accusers or allow the defendants to confront their accusers in open court. But use of torture to obtain evidence was standard procedure in all continental (civil as well as ecclesiastical) courts until the eighteenth century. And defendants could give the inquisitors a list of their known enemies, who were supposed to be removed from among their accusers. As for the use of the death penalty, that was common in the Middle Ages for the crime of heresy, used by Jews as well as Christians. The Jewish community in Cordoba and Seville in the eleventh century had also executed heretics with permission of the Moslem ruler.

The *Marranos* after 1480 suffered execution ("released to the secular arm") by burning if they persisted in being loyal to Judaism or were repeatedly convicted of secretly being Jews. Probably half of these were strangled before being burnt. The inquisitorial records are fragmentary but historians estimate between two and four thousand crypto-Jews were executed by the Spanish Inquisition between 1480 and 1520 and very few thereafter. As these figures indicate, most of the New Christians were sincere converts or at least behaved as conventional Christians, and both the paranoid claims of some inquisitors and the myths propagated by modern Jewish historians that most Jewish converts were actually *Marranos* (crypto-Jews) are fanciful. Whether because of conviction or fear, the great majority of New Christians were unquestionably apostates, and within a generation or two rarely different in their religious commitments from the rest of the population.

Indeed the great majority of Jewish converts were more than sincere. From among learned and aristocratic New Christian families came some of the greatest names in early sixteenth-century Spanish ecclesiastical and cultural history: the Erasmian humanist Juan Luis Vives; the apostle to the Native Americans and nemesis of the reckless *conquistadors*, Bartolome de Las Casas; Saint Teresa of

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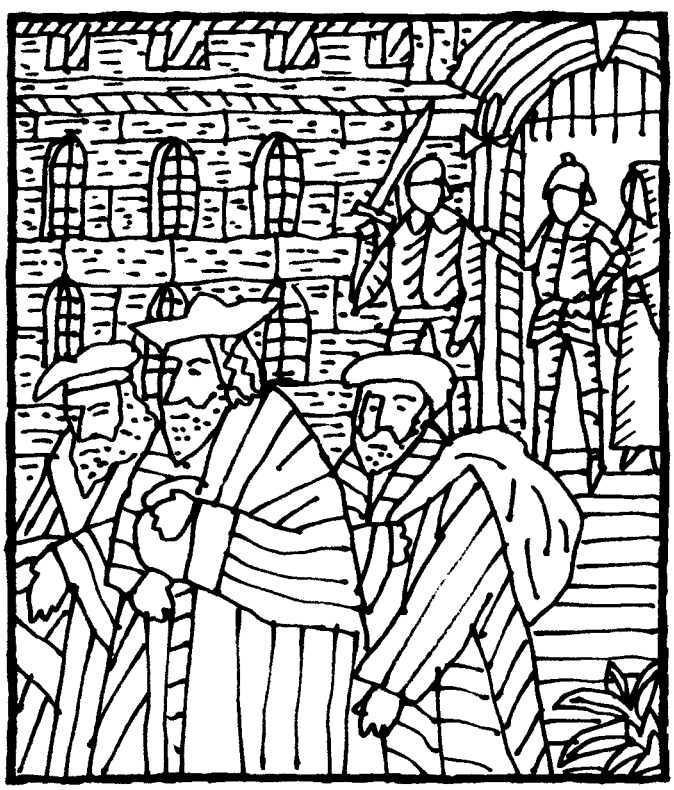
Avila (the teacher of Saint John of the Cross); as well as some leading bishops of the time such as Hernando de Talavaro, the first bishop of Granada, formerly Queen Isabella's confessor. It is not an exaggeration to see the role of the scions of converted Jewish families as central to the Spanish Renaissance of the early sixteenth century as were Jews in the modernist cultural revolution of the early twentieth century. In both cases complete access to general culture induced an explosion of intellectual creativity. The Jewish New Christians and their children in the early sixteenth century embraced Christian thought and learning with the same kind of creative enthusiasm that assimilated Jews contributed to modernism in literature and theory between 1900 and 1940.

The demand for expulsion of the Jews in the 1490s was justified on grounds that as long as there were observant Jews around in Spain, converts to Christianity would be tempted to return secretly to their religion, would be corrupted in their faith and betray Christ. Seizure of Jewish property by the crown was also a motive—as it had been in the expulsion of the Jews from England and France around 1300. Here again we run into conventional myth—about the vast numbers of Jews who supposedly departed rather than underwent baptism in 1492. Some prominent ones did depart, particularly Don Isaac Abarbanel, one of the two leading Jewish ministers of the crown. The other, Abraham Seneor, who helped finance Columbus's first voyage, converted. Rather than the 100,000 to 150,000 customarily cited, the number of Jews who departed in 1492 was probably around only 40,000, about half the practicing Jews in the country. And initially the great majority of them did not go far. They crossed over into Portugal. Although an expulsion or conversion order was issued by the Portuguese crown in 1497, it was loosely enforced until the mid-sixteenth century. Later in the century Portuguese Jews moved in large numbers to Protestant Amsterdam (and from these a handful went to England, to which Jews were readmitted in 1653). The Spanish Jews who suffered the 1492 exodus, if they did not go with the majority to Portugal, went to Italy, particularly to Venice, Leghorn, and of all places Rome (the popes usually protected them—an old tradition on the Tiber and still in effect in the 1940s), and to Turkey. The Ottoman sultan was eager to import Jews to boost the economy of his empire, and a significant number of the Jews who left Portugal in the sixteenth century found comfortable refuge in Turkish domains, particularly in Greece. The Salonika community which the Nazis eliminated in the early 1940s were descendants of these Sefardim.



Of the descendants of the 150,000 to 200,000 Jews who had lived in the Iberian peninsula in 1390, 80 percent were still in Sefarad in 1520, but they were now Christians. If Spain declined economically with the sixteenth century—a controversial proposition—it wasn't because of the exodus of the Jews. There is no more prominent and persistent myth about 1492 than that the expulsion of the Jews ruined the Spanish economy and thus retribution fell upon the Catholic monarchy. Among the significant outcomes of the Iberian expulsion, the alleged economic decline of Spain was not one.

The Jews who fled Sefarad appear to have done as well or better abroad. Jewish capitalists, usually of Sefardi origin, became extremely important in North Italian, Turkish, and Balkan commerce and industrial development after 1550. The Hapsburg Austrian cousins of the Spanish rulers in the seventeenth century made great use of these Jewish capitalists to finance the Thirty Years' War against Protestants in Central Europe and to supply the Hapsburg armies. Jewish businessmen played a major role in the rise of the international mercantilist (state-controlled) form of capitalism in the early modern period. There is a definite Sefardi or *Marrano* ingredient in the rise of mercantilist type capitalism, especially in Central Europe and in the Adriatic region.

Another outcome of 1492 was stimulation of the Jewish Reformation. Beginning in Palestine, Greece, and Turkey there was a violent emotional reaction against the imagined Iberian expulsion from Eden. It came to symbolize a time of *shoah* (destruction) as the prophet Isaiah called it, or *zimzum* as the Kabbalists called it—when God contracts his *shekinah* (power, shadow) in the world so that the anti-divine forces of *kellipah* (satan) might momentarily triumph. Since this could be viewed eschatologically as the ultimate disaster preceding the coming of the messiah, there was a riotous outburst of pseudo-messianism in the Jewish world of the seventeenth century, led by Nathan of Gaza in Palestine, Sabbatai Zevi in Turkey, and Joseph Frank in Poland. The hostility of the Jewish masses against the international Jewish capitalist-rabbinical-courtier elite definitely was an ingredient of this messianic upheaval, and spilled over, after the collapse of messianism, into the eighteenth-century social democratic Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe.

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The third great event of 1492, much celebrated and debated this past year, was the Columbian enterprise. It was, first of all, a direct outcome of the other two changes, the Moslem and Jewish ones. The Portuguese had already tried to undermine Arab wealth and power in the Eastern Mediterranean by opening up a route around South Africa to India, the source of the silks, spices, and jewels that the Turks imported from East Asia and sold at great markups to the Western European nobility. The Portuguese were also trying to tap into the Arab dominance of the black African slave trade. They had success in the latter, and five years after Columbus's first voyage, they rounded South Africa and opened the sea route to India, later establishing a great commercial center in the Goa which they held until very recent times.

Columbus was also trying to override Moslem commercial wealth. He offered to the Spanish crown another route to India across the Atlantic. The outcome of Portuguese and Spanish seafaring was the decline of the Arabic Mediterranean world by the early seventeenth century. However, the Catholic powers were forced, in the seventeenth century, to share the wealth of India and the African slave trade with the rising Protestant powers of Holland and England.

Columbus's voyages were related also to the Jewish experience in Spain. He too was descended from a Jewish convert family, as he indicated in his will. He was, however, not trying to find a home for exiled Jews. He was trying to bring all history to a conclusion. There was a powerful messianic movement in the Spanish church at the end of the fifteenth century. It was an old idea that history would end and Christ would return only when the church was fully triumphant in the world. Conversion of the Jews was one important sign of that totalization of Christianity. Another was the conversion of the peoples of the East, for which Columbus's voyages were intended to establish the basis. He took with him on his first voyage an Arabic-speaking Jewish New Christian to spread the faith in the Orient.

Wasn't this a conflation of religion and imperialism? Of course it was; that was central to Western civilization until 1945. Wouldn't this lead to massacring the Native Americans? Not necessarily if enlightened churchmen like Las Casas could have gotten control of the *conquistadors*, which they didn't. Yet most of the appalling loss of life among the Native Americans (19 out of 20 million in Mexico) came from disease—immune deficiency—rather than the sword and gun, although there was plenty of that terror too. Didn't Columbus and his successors ravage the delicate ecology of the New World? Of course they did. Europeans had been ravaging their own environment for half a millennium so persistently that by 1500 they had deforested much of Western Europe and were running out of both wood for fuel and the game that had provided the staple of their high-protein, red-meat diet. America saved the European food supply by providing the potato for human consumption and maize (Indian corn) as fodder for cattle. Fuel was obtained in the sixteenth century by opening up coal mines, although burning of soft coal began the pollution of the European atmosphere.

Fourteen ninety-two illustrates the nature of a Christian commonwealth that emerged out of the European experience in Spain as much as anywhere else. Moslems and Arabs had to be beaten on the battlefield and bypassed and superseded commercially. Jews were one way or the other to be brought into the church. Their separation was an impediment to the Second Coming and the end of history, a barrier to realizing eschatological hopes. So Jews had to be converted. Mind you, their blood was not as pure as the blood of old Christian families (Judah Halevi, the Spanish Jewish thinker in the early twelfth century, similarly said converts to Judaism were not equal to the old Jews). In the Christian commonwealth Jews were not to be allocated a first-class status. But in spite of much rustling of genealogical lists among the Spanish nobility, this was a provision usually impossible to enforce, after two or three generations, what with total assimilation. Empire was there for the taking, to serve the monarchy, the church, and the nobility. This was the idea of the Christian commonwealth that 1492 signifies.

We are taught in our egalitarian and multiethnic culture to anathematize this whole set of ideas and behavior patterns. Yet both North and South America are its legacy. Many today bewail this history. They seem to prefer that the Christian commonwealth should not have exercised its power, enterprise, and learning. They would have left the Americas and its edenic green climes to the aborigines. It is a moral thought, perhaps a spiritual epiphany, to feel that way. But that is not what 1492 was all about. It happened and we are its products and have to make the best of 1492's consequences.

The Spain that was a Christian commonwealth in 1492 and is heavily condemned today had obvious authoritarian, intolerant, racist, and violent characteristics. Put in a positive light, the argument on behalf of the Christian commonwealth of 1492 comes down to the following. First, it was the product of a very long development stretching back through the Middle Ages into antiquity. It was the product of experience. It had been shaped by centuries of thought and action. This past had been embossed in philosophy, theology, literature, music, and art. It was a very thick, expressive, richly cultivated, and ornately elaborated and aggressively exhibited culture. The Spanish Christian commonwealth was not the creation of murdering *conquistadors*—mostly underemployed petty nobility and mercenary soldier riffraff—nor of slave traders. These were not its leaders and spokesmen, its thinkers and innovators; they were its marginal consumers and occasional instruments, and its parasites. The humanism of Vives and Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (the greatest gentile biblical scholar up to that time), the painting of El Greco, the spiritual expressions of SaintsTeresa and Ignatius Loyola, the universal social compassion of Las Casas—these were central to the Spanish Christian commonwealth. Where and when have men and women done better?

Spanish Christian culture aimed at the baroque which is lay-

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ered and developed elaboration, which values the complex and longitudinally (diachronically) developed. Today's anthropological polemic gives all value to the antibaroque—the simple, the underdeveloped, the primitive, the synchronic (nonhistorical). Anthropology as a discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century emerged in service to imperial powers and colonial administrations and used a hierarchic Darwinian evolutionary model. Today, in guilty revulsion, anthropology has swung ideologically in the opposite direction. Now it gives no credit to complexity, development, historical sequence, cultural accretion, elaboration of thought and art. Therefore Spanish Christian culture of the sixteenth century was slated to be denigrated by historians loyal to recent anthropological assumptions.

We may choose to say with Claude Lévi-Strauss that structurally the savage and baroque minds are the same and that the savage mind in its closeness to authentic humanity is preferable; or we may choose to live with and participate in the consequences of history so that the layered and developed differences between the savage and baroque minds are deemed intrinsically important, leading to valorization of the Christian commonwealth.

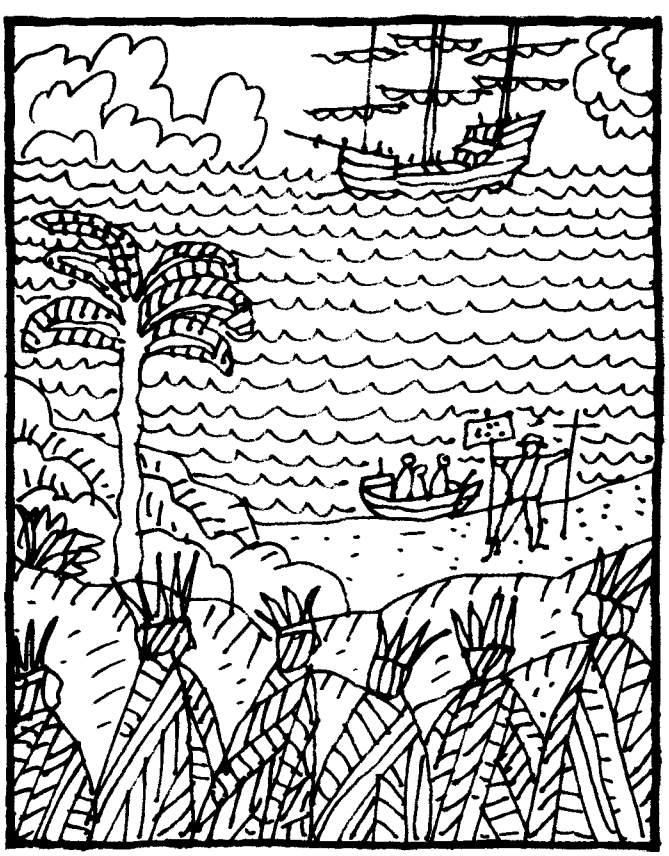
What began in the academic world in France in the 1950s has now come to dominate the universities in Europe and the Americas and has penetrated deep into general culture as expressed in the media: synchronic anthropology has prevailed over diachronic history. The idea of a Christian commonwealth as realized in sixteenth-century Spain and its layered baroque, imperial culture is denigrated and the American aborigines extolled. There is a direct line from Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) to Kirkpatrick Sale and the other polemicists who now condemn Columbus and the Spanish Christian culture he represents.

The denigration of the idea of a Christian commonwealth goes back to the 150 years following 1492. A rationalist, scientific, antitraditional frame of mind, skeptical about the core of religious culture, arose among some of the Marrano families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The emergence of a post-Christian commonwealth secular mentality can be traced to a handful of *Marrano* families that found themselves caught between Judaism and Christianity, bouncing back and fourth between the two faiths and two cultures, until they became disoriented and disenchanted equally with priests and rabbis.

We can see this secularization, I think, with the Spanish New Christian Fernando Rojas, the creator of the subversive picaresque novel (*La Celestina*) in the early sixteenth century, and the forerunner of Cervantes's critique of decaying medieval culture. We can see it in the skeptical humanism of Montaigne who was also of *Marrano* lineage. We can see it in the writings of two Dutch Jews of Portuguese extraction in the third quarter of the seventeenth century—Uriel de Costa, who condemned rabbinical Judaism and was excommunicated by the Jewish community of Amsterdam, and Baruch Spinoza, who turned away from the whole theistic tradition toward a new kind of scientific naturalism and universalism and was also excommunicated from the Jewish community.

What generated this postmedieval secular rationalism was essentially two things. First, the idea of a Christian commonwealth is an extremely difficult and complex one, in which many components have to be held in balance. Under the circumstances of sixteenth-century war, imperialism, and ideological conflict, such a balance became too hard to sustain. It required humanistic idealists like Vives and Las Casas (or Erasmus and Thomas More), but there weren't enough of them to do so effectively. Second, the *Marrano* descendants who were buffeted about in the sixteenth century from one religion to another became alienated from both, and turned first to moneymaking in international mercantilist capitalism and then to secular, scientific rationalism. They were immensely successful in these endeavors. A parallel can be drawn with the Jewish immigrants to America after 1890 from the traditionalist and Hasidic shtetls of Eastern Europe. They too abandoned devotion to their old faith and did extremely well in business and science and embraced doctrines of radical secularism.

The great weakness of late medieval Judaism was its finite, static quality. Its only innovative wing was in hazardous theosophic irrationalism. It could not offer a durable response to persecution and discomfort or a comprehensive social theory. At the same time, those many Sefardic Jewish intellectuals who after 1390, and for whatever initial motive, proceeded to cross over into Christianity found in Latin Christian culture a much more complex and vibrant culture than their own. They eagerly embraced it and themselves pushed it in obsessive eschato-



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More about 1492

I have learned much about 1492 from:

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For the theory and practice of the medieval Christian commonwealth, *see* Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, forthcoming, New York: HarperCollins, 1993. For the significance of the common law and an overview of its history, *see* Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, New York, 1991, chapter 2. N.F.C.

logical directions. But this high idealism soon ran into the realities of sixteenth-century politics and economics. The reach of the Spanish state toward world power, abetted by the intensely exploited wealth of America, made the heavily *conversos*-shaped, humanistic Iberian Christianity of around 1500 incapable of practical realization.

Catholic Iberia and Protestant Holland were not the only crucibles of a new European culture. Off in England in 1492 or thereabout something was happening that is immediately significant for us in the United States today—the emergence of yet another culture, an alternative both to the Christian commonwealth and scientific universalism: the juristic state founded upon English common law. By 1492 the new Tudor dynasty had overcome its shaky and illegitimate start and secured its continuity. The quiet monarchy of Henry VII did not believe in world conquest to stimulate the advent of the messiah and was too poor for grandiose enterprises. All Henry Tudor could finance overseas was an expedition to the Newfoundland fisheries—dried codfish instead of gold and silver.

England was a country that enclosed other aspects of life, politics, economics, and culture within a framework of procedure developed by the medieval common lawyers. It was the legal profession that took over the leadership of English government and society, and placed the ambitions and idiosyncrasies of kings and queens, the demands of prelates and the visionary pronouncements of preachers and scholars within a tightly defined mediating juristic framework. Legislation through the high court of Parliament became a contrived mechanism for change, and was at the same time absolutely, incontestably sovereign. Deliberate, slow-moving, and limited in its scope and imagination, common law was central to the late sixteenth-century England of Elizabeth I, the juristic queen who ruled through lawyers and parliaments, and who said she did not wish to make windows into people's minds (unless they were civil trouble-makers). The Christian commonwealth of Philip II of Spain tried to conquer England but failed in the defeat of the Armada in 1588.

The year 1588 completed the era 1492 began. It solidified the common law regime, which was transmitted to North America in the seventeenth century. In the English-speaking world all the facets of the Christian commonwealth were normally to operate within the orb of due process and parliamentary government. The new rationalism and skepticism of the Newtonian and Lockean heirs of the *Marranos* of reason were also to find opportunity for their intellectual quests within common law culture.

When I speak of the triumph of 1588 over 1492 I may sound as though I am reverting to the main thesis of one of the two historical bestsellers of Victorian England—James Anthony Froude's anti-Catholic history of sixteenth-century England, which thumped the victory of the allegedly beneficent modernizing forces of Tudor Protestantism over the putative obscurantist medieval forces of Catholic Spain. I am not endorsing this view because

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the common law culture of a juristic continuum and the due process of a legal parliamentary system in which politics, religion, and science would all function were themselves products of the Catholic Middle Ages. By 1400 the common law system as we know it today was substantially complete. You could transport a London barrister of 1400 "back to the future" of New York City in 1992 and all he would need was six months of brush-up training at NYU Law School and he would be ready to practice either civil or criminal law in New York courts.

The common law idea no less than the theory and practice of a Christian commonwealth was a product of the Catholic culture of the Middle Ages. No less than the enigmatic Columbus and the notorious *conquistadors*, the barristers at the Inns of Court who conceived and institutionalized the protomodern juristic state stopped to offer a prayer at a Catholic chapel on their way to work.

That is one conclusion that rises from contemplation of 1492. Another is that while the expulsion of the Sefardic Jews was a cultural and moral shock to the Jewish world, sending it into a kabbalistic and messianic spin that took centuries to play itself out, 1492 was not at all parallel to the Nazi Holocaust. A handful of Jews lost their lives as a result of the 1492 expulsion. Around 40,000 Jews were displaced into exile but some of these and many of their descendants greatly prospered in other countries—the Austrian and Turkish empires, Holland, and Venice. The overwhelming majority of the Iberian ethnic Jews, as a result of 1492 and of the events of the previous century, further integrated themselves into Catholic Spanish culture. They not only contributed importantly to its efflorescence but also were powerful agents in shaping its character in idealistic and missionary directions. An additional paradoxical outcome of 1492 was the emergence in the following 150 years of a post-medieval *Marrano* rationalism and naturalism that challenged Counter-Reformation Catholicism and rabbinical and kabbilistic Judaism alike.

Fourteen ninety-two's great events were overwhelmingly the consequence of religious idealism. The principal actors were suffused with eschatological and messianic expectations. The three great events of 1492 were meant to be signals of the end of time and the conclusion of history. Yet indirectly the events of 1492 moved society and culture toward materialistic and rationalistic outcomes that contravened religious idealism. These outcomes were the Iberian exploitation of America and the rise of overseas empires; the strengthening of monopolistic capitalism and state power; and the rise of secular rationalism and science. The Spanish humanists of the early sixteenth century dreamed (as did Erasmus and Thomas More) of a refined and learned Christian commonwealth but what emerged instead was the absolutist state, the exploitive empire, commercial capitalism, and scientific naturalism. Everything was different from what Las Casas, Vives, and Ximenes hoped for and to which many intellectuals among the Jewish converts were passionately committed. This new world taking shape in the seventeenth century was the expatriate *Marranos*' revenge on the idea of a Christian commonwealth, and it was a cultural and political structure as removed from rabbinic Judaism as from medieval Catholicism.

Only the liberal juristic polity that developed in England could circumscribe the dynamic materialistic and rationalistic forces of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Only the common law doctrines of due process and parliamentary sovereignty could at the same time provide a framework within which capitalism could be contained and a social ethic that science could endorse. Not the admiral, the saint, the inquisitor, the *conquistador*, or the philosopher but the lawyer was to be moral arbiter of the postmedieval order. □

E.B. de Vito

Make No Mistake

So much for that imbroglio, that clash.
Now all the brooding ashes have erupted,
the sleeping volcano wakened
with a monumental quake,
but even with new hurts
added to the old,
make no mistake—
what's left is still
enough of what was there.

Lovers have a weapon
like that of the hero, Dagda,
that with one end, could kill,
with the other, restore to life.

We live with rules
that expand, shrink, stretch and bend,
dimensions that inevitably extend
in atmospheres of alternate cold and heat,
with horizons that advance, hold or retreat,
where ultimates disappear
and omegas are unrelated to an end.

So much for the thunders, for the storm.
When angry echoes vanish in midair,
make no mistake—
what's gone is just
whatever we can spare;
what's left is still
whatever was always there,
a bit more weathered, even battered,
a touch more humbled, but intact, intact.

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THREE FACES OF VINCENT

PIALET'S 'VAN GOGH'

The late Marvin Mudrick once wrote that "for the mass media...Poe, Van Gogh, and Toulouse-Lautrec are spectacularly visible, they are public images congenial to a visual medium....Poe's dank tarns and ghoul-haunted baggy eyes, Toulouse-Lautrec's half-sized legs, the piece of Van Gogh's ear that he sliced off and carried as a gift to one of the girls at the brothel....TV and the movies don't make their choices without a reason."

I wish Mudrick had lived long enough to see Maurice Pialet's *Van Gogh*. If he had, he might have shaken his head and growled. "Never trust a French director with a public image."

Those public images may be bequests to the movies but then they are reshaped by the movies. And by biographies, biographical novels, poems, plays, TV plays, songs, comic strips, et al. For instance, the Lincoln who roams my imagination is a composite creation by Benjamin Thomas, Walt Whitman, Shelby Foote, Lord Charnwood, Aaron Copland, Carl Sandburg, Henry Fonda, Walter Huston, Raymond Massey, and the *Classics Illustrated* comic book I read when I was nine. These contributions to my personal Lincoln may jar and jostle but there is also some overlap, some agreement. Some Lincolns stand majestically erect, some gangle, none is short. Some are easy in the company of women, some are shy, none is a Don Juan. Fonda may play it coy and cagey in John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* and the hero of Gore Vidal's novel may be downright Machiavellian, but no Lincoln of biography or fiction can be a blackguard or a dunce. There is a sort of tonal center to the image of each famous historical character and each biographer, novelist, and moviemaker strays from that center at his peril.

Up to now, up to the release of Pialet's *Van Gogh*, this has held true for moviemakers creating fictionalized accounts of the Dutch painter's life. Both Vincent Minnelli and Robert Altman boldly juggle the facts of Van Gogh's life but without fundamentally tampering with the image of Van Gogh as the Great Martyr of Art that has been with us for a century.

In Minnelli's *Lust for Life* (script by Norman Corwin from Irving Stone's novel), Kirk Douglas's Vincent is all crouched, pleading fury, a fury caused by his love—for individuals, for humankind, for art—being constantly rejected. He may lust for life but life boots him up the backside. Whether denouncing the stuffy clergymen who forbid him to minister to miners, or on all fours to cousin Kai, pleading for her love, or imploring smug tough guy Gauguin for a little understanding, Douglas's Van Gogh is kin to all those misunderstood kids of fifties movies like *Rebel without a Cause* or *East of Eden*. He's James Dean with a beard. The image most people take away from this movie is that of the bandaged, self-mutilated Van Gogh thrusting his face out of a window and screaming at the jeering crowd below: "Leave me alone! Leave me alone!" In the decade of *The Organization Man*, Minnelli made of Vincent the Disorganized Man, too clumsy to fit in, too sensitive to love. But oh, how he would love to be loved!

This is a partial view, soft-centered and masochistic, for it leaves out the Vincent who drove brother Theo nearly nuts with whining and needling, kicked one of his asylum attendants in the stomach and offered to give one of his analysts "a really close shave" when he surprised the poor doctor at his morning ablutions. Yet *Lust for Life* also has a firm purchase on its corner of the Van Gogh story. After all, Vincent *was* a self-made pariah, constantly yearning to love, yet constantly insuring by his actions that love would never come to pass. *Lust for Life* may be a bit too simplistic, but it is an honorable tearjerker.

Robert Altman's *Vincent and Theo* (script by Julian Mitchel) presents another partial but valid view of the painter. This Vincent is an angry, even ferocious young man. The film begins with his decision at age twenty-seven to dedicate himself to art. Unlike *Lust for Life*, this film makes no reference to the painter's early religious aspirations so we can't place his artistic zeal in the context of a larger zeal to serve humanity. For all we know of this Van Gogh's aesthetic credo, he might be an exponent of art-for-art's-sake, a movement quite popular in Vincent's day but firmly rejected by the Dutchman, who thought of his painting as one tool among many to enlighten and comfort *all* people, not just the aesthetically sophisticated. (The Minnelli film is gratifyingly clear about this.) This Van Gogh is stuck in a prolonged adolescence but, unlike Kirk Douglas, Tim Roth eschews pathos and emphasizes the artist's abrasiveness. This Van Gogh is of the race of Rimbaud, Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, and all other artists who conceive of their work as a gob of spit expectorated in the direction of the bourgeoisie. This portrayal narrows our view of Van Gogh as much as *Lust for Life* does, but it also has some insight into a man who was at times bitter, even blasphemous, though not so consistently as Altman's film would have it.

Watching the opening scenes of Pialet's *Van Gogh*, you wouldn't dream of calling the movie's hero tormented or an artistic martyr or even Dutch. When Jacques Dutronc as Vincent steps off the train in Auvers, the town where his therapist, Dr. Gachet, lives, he looks the very model of a mature, sophisticated Frenchman. A youngish Charles de Gaulle in profile, well-spoken, decently appareled, easy in his approach to strangers but, as is the way of all mature Frenchmen (at least in movies), weary and wary of life and love. He has the languid grace of one of Colette's playboys.

And what about Van Gogh's famous enthusiasm about art, argumentativeness, and volatility? Dutronc doesn't even raise an eyebrow when Dr. Gachet's daughter, dissatisfied with his portrait of her, gives him a lengthy tongue lashing. And Van Gogh's lack of ease with women? Dutronc no sooner finds lodging in an inn than he is roguishly putting his hand up the serving maid's skirt. This Vincent consorts with prostitutes, as did the real Vincent, but they are gorgeous, graceful creatures, not the wretches that Vincent, a wellspring of non-stop pity, fa-

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vored. And soon Dutronc-Vincent is also sleeping with Dr. Gachet's daughter, Marguerite, even daring to possess her on the empty passenger car of the train they have taken to and from all-night revels in Vincent's favorite Paris bistro where he has just drunk Toulouse-Lautrec under the table and taken part in a line dance with the gusto of a Gallic Zorba.

Now just who is this guy? A completely fictional character who just happens to be called Vincent Van Gogh?

Well, why not? Why should we hold Pialet answerable to countless biographies and pseudo-biographies? Isn't he to be allowed to sculpt his own fictional figure out of the raw materials of facts?

But suppose the facts left in Pialet's fiction (for he hasn't dispensed with biography altogether) are rendered preposterous by his inventions? For instance, Pialet's Van Gogh is, after all, a mental patient. So what is the nature of his psychological torment? This movie doesn't give us a clue. There's no examination of the artist's familial relations or religious crises or anything else that brought him to the point where he needs psychological help.

In this film we occasionally see Vincent's canvasses. Is there any way this innovative, volcanic art could have been accomplished by this perpetually laid-back guy that Dutronc portrays? No way. Even more out of place are the few acts of self-destructiveness we see Vincent commit, and most out of place is the suicide. When Van Gogh walks out of that famous wheatfield with his self-inflicted gunshot wound draining his life away, nothing that we have seen has led up to it.

To be fair, that may be Pialet's very point. He seems to be telling us that speculation about the roots of Vincent's behavior, perhaps any person's behavior, is fruitless. Every human being is a mysterious surface and nobody can penetrate that surface. All portrayals of Vincent as martyr, as wild man, as holy man, as near-psychotic or saint, are merely reflections of our own need to romanticize and to pigeonhole those whose actions disturb us. Readers of R.D. Laing and Michel Foucault will love this movie.

And Pialet also draws a bead on one other cherished notion: the feeling that artists, as the antennae of the human race, are more deserving of attention than the rest of humanity. In the final scenes of *Van Gogh*, the dying Vincent looks up from his pillow and asks Theo for something to drink. The younger brother leaves the bedroom and, upon returning with the refreshment, finds Vincent dead. No last words, no pathetic farewell, none of Kirk Douglas's "Oh, Theo, I want to go home" or Tim Roth's "Could I have my pipe?" No death scene at all. But, a few seconds later, we are with Van Gogh's landlady in her kitchen and a misplaced board falls on her foot. Screams, yells, scolding, household panic, high drama, virtual Armageddon! It's clear what Pialet is after here: the drama we see in any great man's life is the drama we have retrospectively created for it, and it is we, the consumers of sentiment and grand passion, who insist that such lives come to a satisfying conclusion with a moving death tableau. But, if a board falls on a landlady's foot and

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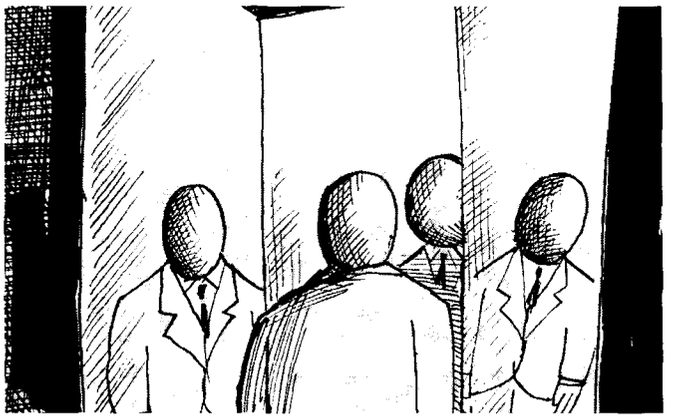

she makes a godalmighty fuss about it, why is that less dramatic, less worthy of our attention than the unseen death of an obscure Dutch painter in a little upstairs room of a seedy inn?

As befits the director's aims, Pialet's style, apparently influenced by Robert Bresson's, is a model of dispassion, even detachment. His camera stays in the middle distance—no odd angles, no unusual editing, no flamboyant pans. The color camerawork is so subdued that it reproduced itself in my mind as black-and-white a few hours after I saw the film. (And this for a movie about a painter who wanted each color on his canvasses to cry out!) One bland two-shot follows another. The natural backgrounds, though potentially of great beauty, aren't used for dramatic effect. The various dialogues, like the conversations of our everyday lives, mix trivia with crucial matters but in such a way that the momentous is usually subdued by the trivial. The acting, though competent, is so naturalistic that no glances or vocal inflections linger in the memory. The overall effect is flat, anti-dramatic, often boring.

Pialet's *Van Gogh* drives us away from its hero, blocks our preconceptions of what Vincent was like but without offering us a substitute conception that makes sense. This film isn't a case of a filmmaker cautioning us not to understand a complex man too quickly. Pialet isn't warning us; he's snubbing us. He has made a Vincent Van Gogh movie that tells us we can't know Vincent Van Gogh. RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

NEW TALENT
YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS' FESTIVAL

NewYork's Young Playwrights' Festival is in its eleventh season and, to my discredit, I have gone to a program for the first time this year. I did try back in 1990, as a curious playgoer not as a reviewer, but there was not a seat to be had—not even for ready money. The YPF has its loyal supporters. I wanted then to see Allison Birch's *Believing*, which I had read and seen performed in Philadelphia, and to see how a play that I liked held its own among the winners of the national competition for playwrights, eighteen and under. Very well, from all reports.

If I have been derelict on the national level, I have at least been keeping an eye on the Philadelphia Young Playwrights' Festival since 1988, when the program was first instituted. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 27, 1988) ran a story about the young playwrights at Simon Gratz High School in North Philadelphia. A snippet of dialogue from one of the plays so impressed me that I wrote to the teacher in charge, Marsha Pincus (who understandably keeps winning teaching awards), and asked if I could see the play. She sent me a copy of "Plays in Progress" (a name that the Theatre Communications Group uses for the work of more exalted dramatists) so that I could see the first year's work. Under the program, the teacher teases plays from interested students and the young writers work with a local playwright (Rufus Caleb at Gratz); there are staged readings at each school and the winners go on to a city-wide festival. Gratz is a large inner-city school in a tough neighborhood (one of the playwrights was killed by a bullet meant for someone else), and the playwrights there deal straightforwardly or comically or sentimentally with drugs, drink, sex, and abuse inside and outside the family. As the PYPF became better known and better financed, it spread to other schools—suburban schools, private schools—and a certain sophistication about how plays are made has surfaced in the results. Although I wish all the young playwrights well, I remain a Gratz fan because the program there allows students with practically no experience of theater to expose their fears and longings, their street language and odd lyricism, and, then, as the play is worked and reworked with the advice of outside readers, teachers, playwrights, directors, to find a shape for what they want to say.

If I had come cold to the festival in New York and seen Terrance Jenkin's *Taking Control*, I would have recognized it as a Simon Gratz play. Both he and Allison Birch are Gratz alumni. He first submitted the play to the New York festival in 1990 and, after reworking it so thoroughly that it is almost a new piece, had it accepted for this season's program. It begins with an idealized family scene, variations of which punctuate the otherwise realistic play. It concerns three young girls who live with their foul-mouthed, abusive, alcoholic grandmother. Tarae, the middle child, is the strongest of the three, the one who tries to take control, to deal with her older sister who has become pregnant at sixteen. Structured in brief scenes, like a television drama (TV is a major influence on most Gratz playwrights), it allows Tarae to confront her father, a drunk whose response to any disquieting demand on him is violence or the threat of violence; her mother, who has become a prostitute (a classy house, not a street corner) in search of the life that she missed as a teen-age mother; and her grandmother, who collapses into helplessness when the family pattern seems to be repeating itself.

The final image is of the three girls, sharing an embrace, giving one another the love and support that they have not found elsewhere. The happy ending is one of the characteristics of

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Gratz plays in their first incarnations, whether the playwright is being led by the example of television or by a longing for benign solutions to seemingly impossible problems, but Jenkins has gone beyond the easy out, the positive summing-up. His play ends in ambiguity. Tarae is so attractive a character that one would like her to have the strength to take control, but the evidence of the play itself suggests that she and her sisters are a new generation of victims. The play may be impelled more by a need to demonstrate (one exemplary scene after another) than by dramatic necessity, but the scenes are vivid and Jenkins has created a remarkable character in the grandmother—frightening, brutally funny, pathetic—particularly as played by Novella Nelson.

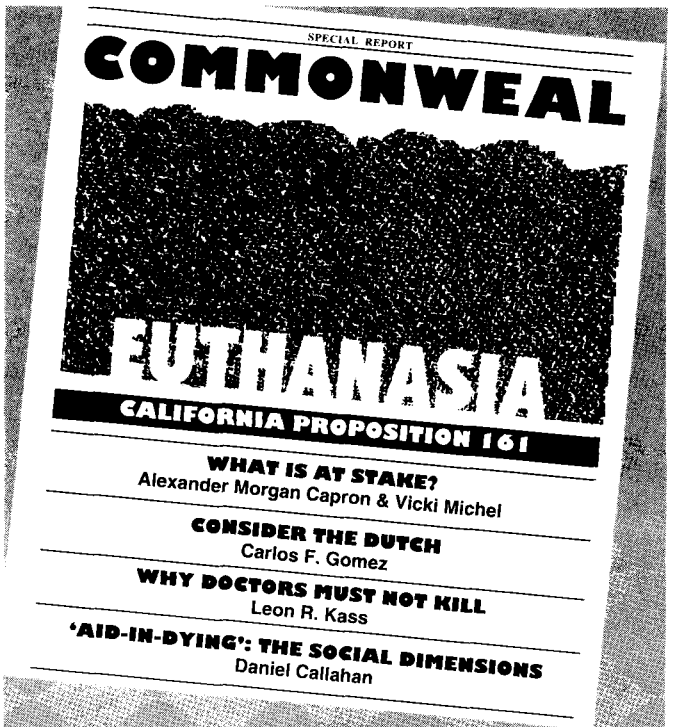
Taking Control is an odd play out in the festival. The others are obviously theatrical pieces. Aurorae Khoo's *The P.C. Laundromat* is a satirical fable in which the couple who run the laundromat—all fast patter and fancy footwork—appear to embrace the multicultural, multiracial society, but—as their laundry lesson for a young Asian-American woman indicates—they wash away diversity. Joanna Norland's *Mothers Have Nine Lives* consists of nine often very funny monologue sketches (played by three performers) which present a variety of mothers, from the indifferent to the overworked. The pieces are joined by the frenetic activity of two little girls playing "Mommy," a device that quickly becomes tiresome and which seems to be there only for the final ironic complaint of the little girl forced to play the child that being Mommy is the best.

Robert Levy's *Mrs. Neuberger's Dead* is in some ways the most intriguing of the four plays—certainly the most elusive, the most opaque. It is about an unemployed drug-taking dropout and his girlfriend, fresh from alcohol rehab, who live in a derelict apartment in New York, middle-class young people driven toward self-destruction by something not as clearly defined as are the social forces in *Taking Control*. They are invaded by an amiable Bible salesman, a self-proclaimed prophet who sleeps with the young man and tells them that the end of the world is at hand. They wait, half in anticipation, half in regret, but when the promised end does not come, they seem to reach tentatively toward reconstruction individually and as a couple. A final complicitous look between the prophet and a young woman with whom the girl has slept at the rehab center suggest that they are some kind of guardian figures from a raunchier T.S. Eliot comedy. They are played by black actors although there is nothing in the script to suggest that their blackness is significant to their mission (perhaps it is simply color-blind casting), and the redemptive power of same-sex copulation is a little obscure. I would hate to have to explicate the play—including the bizarre and perhaps imaginary suicide that gives the work its title—but onstage it is a vigorous, funny, obscene, and occasionally annoying and it hints at a positive spiritual underlay. It is either parodic seriousness or serious parody.

As a whole, the program offers four accomplishments and four promises.

GERALD WEALES

Life & death in California



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The seer of Covington

PILGRIM IN THE RUINS
A Life of Walker Percy
Jay Tolson
Simon and Schuster, $27.50, 519 pp.

Robert Coles

Two years ago this past May Walker Percy died at home in Covington, Louisiana, his departure still an aching absence for many readers who regarded his six novels and two books of philosophical reflection as something a good deal more than a major contribution to American letters and to late twentieth-century moral inquiry—as a singular voice, maybe, crying in the wilderness, a voice that helped lots of us begin to come to our senses, and at least try to find our bearings. No book, of course, can bring back such an important presence (what Percy had become by the 1980s) but it is a tribute to Jay Tolson's biography of him, the first that encompasses the entire span of his life, that Percy does, indeed, come alive on the printed page, and as a result, I suspect, many of his fans will be immensely grateful.

At first glance Percy's life (in contrast to his work) does not seem to lend itself to the kind of sustained presentation Tolson offers: half a thousand pages of exposition that tell of a writer who was a resolutely private man, who lived a decent, faithful, monogamous life, who was a loving, conscientious father and grandfather, who kept loyal, affectionate contact with his two brothers and their families, who didn't travel far and wide, or welcome attention when it arrived, and who had no inclination to be a performer when he did appear before the public. Still, as Jane Austen knew, long before there were disciplines called psychology or psychiatry, the mind has its own compelling dramatic life, as do families—and Percy's personal background, not to mention his idiosyncratic, highly charged and penetrating moral sensibility, enable his biographer, a clear, vigorous writer, to more than hold the reader's attention throughout.

No one has explored Percy's early life with the thoroughness and knowing subtlety Tolson has managed. He conveys an entire world—the aristocratic Percys, whose roots go back to eighteenth-century America, and whose various members came to mean so much to the life of states such as Mississippi and Alabama. Early chapters of this book provide an instructive social history of the so-called New South—the effort of a region's leaders to pick up the pieces after the Civil War, turn away from the ghosts and obsessions of the past in favor of a fresh start for a region all too recently wasted, defeated. Walker Percy's grandfather (they bore the same name) was one of the leading citizens of Birmingham, Alabama—a lawyer of great distinction who committed suicide. Percy's father, LeRoy (he, too was a prominent Birmingham lawyer) also committed suicide. "Dark funks ran deep in the Percy family line," we are told—and then a discussion of the psychology of depression as it connects with a regional culture strong on obligation and even self-sacrifice as a code of honor for certain distinguished families. Walker Percy, needless to say, would struggle all his life with that matter of melancholy and its consequences, not only in connection with his father, who shot himself fatally when his son was only thirteen, but his mother, who was killed in an automobile accident when he was not yet sixteen—she had reportedly been somewhat agitated as she drove, her youngest son,

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POEMS
A.F. Moritz

In Puerto Rico

In 1949 Juan Ramon made this list
of synonyms: god, essence, noble consciousness,
you, beauty utter and complete.
The thing so named, he said, lives not in its young
manhood alone, but most powerfully in its dying.
He prayed to it: I am swallowed up
and swim in you, wholly submerged,
but in you I will never drown,
as a child never suffocates in his mother's womb;
because you are the blood inside me
and I am in you as I am in my blood.

Worker of bronze filigree, delicate
hard words, undaunted. Many sights
and dreams, even in 1949, foretold
the human events that would compose a face
for that vague loved one he addressed.
Already he had been blown far from where he grew,
from mornings of Moguer, cafes of Madrid,
a world's rightness, what should be eternal, grown a
memory.
And then to light in Puerto Rico, aged
but stronger, seeing farther through more tangled leaves,
new powers in the quaint garden, the little house,
the lecture room, the green museum.

There Zenobia died lingeringly. Alone,
he was weaker, older now, disappointed,
and he fell silent, next was injured in his body,
no longer could rise or move about,
and so died: there had remained more loss,
more failure to come, than yet had announced itself
in 1949. Too soon,
those thoughts of congress with direst things,
the words beautiful, utter and complete.
You, noble consciousness, summed up in him,
drowned in the dust of his blood.

The Car

Sometimes they stop the car, get out,
walk, and try to remember something
glimpsed in a courtyard as they flashed by.

Was there a green parrot in a tall gold cage?
A stone bench,
and on a white stone wall
the shadow of a woman's profile,
deep blue and graceful as the shore of a lake?

Didn't the branch of a lemon tree
reach toward her hands,
as if the lemons wanted to be coins?

A door was opening in the far wall.
Who was about to enter?

And the whole scene in memory is so still
that the drive begins again in pursuit
even faster, the images
growing invisible as they flash by.

Streetcar

Somnolence of the running streetcar
shaken, as though by breathing, on its rails.

It stops for some students and the drowsing calm
of the few passengers is crushed.
An uproar of boys and girls escaped from schools
floods in: bright lips, blue-painted eyes, soft hair,
loud laughing at shouted jokes.

And the silences of those who are older and alone,
and were here first, meditative before, are deathly
now.
So each one turns more fixedly to the window
and strains with sight toward radiance of the sun
on chipped blue storefronts and young mothers
dragging children against the weather.

While the young jokes howl on, ancient, repetitive,
stupid and dearly loved: another way
of hovering, like a hand,
over the skin of things.

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(Continued from page 23)

Phin, with her, and there was speculation that she may have inadvertently had a hand in her own demise. (The car turned off a country road, plunged into water, and the boy escaped, to live.)

Percy's mother, Martha Susan Phinizy, came from an eminent and wealthy Georgia family, and she had taken her three sons to visit her dead husband's cousin, the well-known lawyer, poet, and plantation owner, William Alexander Percy, perhaps now best remembered for his memoir *Lanterns on the Levee* (1941). A bachelor, who lived in Greenville, Mississippi, he adopted Walker, his two younger brothers, LeRoy and Phin, when they became orphans. Walker, therefore, ended up attending Greenville High School, then went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and having chosen a career in medicine, to Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Upon becoming a physician, he began a residency in pathology at New York City's Bellevue Hospital, only to fall victim to tuberculosis (1942) before there were antibiotics to tame it. He spent several years in two sanatoria (remissions followed by exacerbations of the disease were notoriously common) and ultimately returned South (1946), where he would soon enough marry Mary Bernice Townsend (Bunt), and settle into a New Orleans (then Covington) life as a husband, a father of two daughters, and a writer, first of philosophical essays, then of fiction.

This brief summary, needless to say, does scant justice to what is, really, an extraordinary family saga: much-blessed people—talented, well-to-do, well-educated, morally superior—struggled against a dangerous mix of moodiness and turmoil that constantly threatened disaster around any corner. No wonder Walker Percy sought out psychoanalysis when he was in medical school, and maintained a lifelong interest in psychiatry, its possibilities and its limitations. Still, he was not destined to become yet another psychological casualty. In fact, his life and the lives of his two brothers ought to give pause to some of us who are preoccupied with the various determinisms (whether of nature or nurture) that supposedly bear down so hard on us. We have Jay Tolson's book because of those brothers, witnesses as children to such tragedy, descendants of a proud family that also suffered so much; one became a writer of great distinction; and the other two would themselves be successful, LeRoy a plantation owner (a most progressive one, too, and a leader during the 1960s among Mississippi white gentry in the struggle against segregation), and Phin a Tulane University law professor. Moreover, all three were to live eminently solid and sound lives—their families worthy morally, culturally, of the outstanding heritage built and handed them by their ancestors.

No question, Walker Percy would connect some of that outcome to his conversion to Catholicism, at the age of thirty-one, a major event in his life, perhaps its turning point, though he would be the last one to think of such a matter psychiatrically: the church as a bulwark to someone emotionally endangered. (His brothers, moreover, have done fine without any special embrace of religion.) He became the person we know, not because of his personal troubles, or his response to those troubles, but because he possessed a brilliant mind, for one thing, and too, a mind exceptionally talented, early on, at social observation and narration. He was, as well, even as a child, especially watchful, able not only to take notice of what people were doing, but figure out the why's of their behavior, and too, the implications. In college he was coming up with astute cultural criticism, and doing so with intelligence, charm, humor—and so it would be throughout his writing life: a wry, ironic sensibility rendered in accessible, inviting prose. Not least, he was left with money by his biological parents and his adoptive father, and thereby he could become for a few years an apprentice storyteller. (He wrote two novels that went unpublished before he set to work on *The Moviegoer*.)

As always in life, luck was also helpful to Percy at certain important moments. His wife, Bunt, is an exceptionally strong person; she was an utter mainstay of his life. Moreover, he himself sometimes wondered how rigorously he'd have pursued his later career as a novelist if A.J. Liebling hadn't stumbled onto *The Moviegoer* (and read it, and loved it) while in Louisiana doing a *New Yorker* profile of Earl Long, then governor of the state. Jean Stafford, Liebling's wife, was one of the National Book Award judges, and no doubt had a significant role as an advocate of the novel with her fellow critics. Percy's publisher, Knopf, had hardly pressed the novel before the public, and it sold few copies—until in 1962, a big surprise, the award went to *The Moviegoer*. Percy was forty-four when that first novel was published, and had been publishing essays in various periodicals (including this one) for a number of years—and might well have been tempted to settle for the satisfactions of such writing if he hadn't been given acknowledgment and sanction for such a major effort on his part. Even so, as this biography keeps reminding us, he was constantly tempted by the philosophical side of himself. He had an abiding interest in the origin of language; he had a skepticism with respect to the secular world's various fads and idolatries—a skepticism he much wanted to voice; and very important, he had a moral passion that prompted a continuing and powerful search for meaning, for

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principles with respect to how this life ought be lived.

Again and again Percy spoke with humility about his intellectual life; he would remind a visitor that he had been a premed student, then learned to be a doctor—hence many missed opportunities to study literature and history. Yet, there he was, for decades, writing about complex philosophical questions both as essayist and as novelist. In fact, he was not only exceptionally bright and thoughtful, he was exceedingly learned—all somewhat concealed by an artfully modest, self-effacing, even self-mocking manner, and very important, by his preference for listening rather than lecturing or declaiming or pontificating, those habits of talkative folk. He was an ironist, a marvelously funny satirist, but also an intensely serious person who never stopped asking the biggest questions—as in the Gauguin triptych: Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?—and who was determined to engage his readers in a similar line of inquiry through every writer's strategy known to him.

Throughout this book Tolson shows great respect and affection for his subject, while reserving the right to stand back, offer a demur here, a disagreement there—a fine tone. Tolson as a chronicler is wonderfully uninterested in the dreary psychological and sociological banalities that inform so much biographical writing these days. But then, we should expect no less from an admirer of Percy's, a careful, appreciative reader of his, hence a student of someone who, early on, took the measure of pretentious twentieth-century academic thinking and scorned it mightily, heartily. Whereas a number of earlier books on Percy have been primarily intellectual biographies, this one offers a year-by-year account of an unfolding life—with stops now and then, for literary analysis, authorial comment. The narrative is enriched by a treasure of marvelously instructive and entertaining letters between Percy and his lifelong friend and fellow writer, Shelby Foote—indeed, their correspondence ought to be separately published.

I read the book slowly, savoring the details, immersing myself, yet again, in the story of a person I've much respected, deeply admired for over thirty years. I hated to come to the end, even as I still can't quite believe that the wonderfully knowing and funny man—his ideas always so provocative, suggestive, edifying, whom Jay Tolson evokes so sensitively and fully—won't, soon, be sending readers yet another story, or disarmingly wry and engaging essay. He was, indeed, a pilgrim—and one sent here to grace us, to help us as we struggle to find ourselves amidst the moral and spiritual ruins of this fast-ending millennium. Surely, the good Lord now holds him close—even as for many of us left behind, life is far lonelier, far less interesting. □

A TOURIST OF FAITH

VIRGIN TIME
In Search of the Contemplative Life
Patricia Hampl
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $20, 242 pp.

Paul Elie

Librarians and others who are called to read the fine print will find that the Library of Congress has classified this book as Apologetics. But Patricia Hampl is emphatically not some apologist, trying to explain and defend the content of religious faith. A poet, she takes a more personal approach. Once a convent-school ingenue, now a MacArthur fellow, she "came to the conviction that I had to see the old world of Catholicism. More than see—had to touch it. Was it still breathing? Making its low murmur over the votive flames in the dark?" And she wondered: just what is prayer all about? So she set out, grants in hand, on pilgrimage to Assisi and Lourdes and a California monastery, all the while recalling her Catholic childhood. Her "search for the contemplative life" is not about the substance of faith but about her approach to it—an approach in which she stops short not only of faith but of the hard questions her encounter with faith might have pressed upon her.

Hampl has been justly celebrated for *A Romantic Education*, her 1981 memoir of two visits to Communist-era Prague, spurred by the mystical sense of Central Europe that she imbibed while growing up in St. Paul. Here, as there, she is a belletrist par excellence, sliding from blow-by-blow journal transcriptions to cultural criticism to precious memoir. And just as she depicted Prague as a repository of the past, a patch of virgin time walled off from the progressive West, so she writes as though the Catholic clock stopped right around the time she herself "left the church (lavish theatrical phrase of my university days) in a blaze of contempt...." After all, she writes, "Nobody says, when asked, 'I'm Catholic.' It's always, 'I was brought up Catholic.'" It is a tribute to her powers of observation and her exact, evocative prose that such a myopic baby-boomer outlook doesn't mar the book more than it does.

Her pilgrimage begins not on an airplane (as the book does, cloyingly) but with her visit to a "cinder-block monastery" near the freeway in St. Paul. There she joins some contemplative nuns in saying the Divine Office, which leads her to conclude that "I wasn't fallen away anymore: now, magically, the church had fallen away," enabling her to revisit the ancient texts as sublime poetry. Her visits also prompt her to ponder her Catholic past—or perhaps it is the other way round, so calculated is her mnemonic process. She recalls watching Kennedy's inauguration with nuns thrilled by Jackie's clothes; feeling superior to Protestant girls as she and her schoolmates "powered around our ordinary lives in the Cadillac language of Catholic spirituality"; and sensing that she was receiving a "contemplative" education in which "Catholicism itself came to us as aura, not as dogma," and "sainthood was a matter of who kept the best notes." It was a romantic education, too, rich in symbol and metaphor

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and purpose. "Numbers are cold comfort," she writes, "to someone fed from girlhood on the corrupting Catholic sweets of being *special*, chosen, outside the proletariat of statistics. Not for me the consolations of probability."

So sure is she of her specialness that the shopworn quality of these recollections—the fodder for numberless Catholic childhood memoirs—seems to have escaped her. She is more uniquely in her element when on pilgrimage proper, setting herself apart from the people whose company she has chosen, seeking "the anonymity at the core of travel, the solitude that must be heaven." She hikes to Assisi with a group of older Britons, duly recording their banal conversations and enjoying their wonder over her: they mistakenly regard her as a Catholic. In the city itself, she hides out from the tourist-crammed churches, instead painting, writing, pressing flowers into her journal, negotiating "the heavy traffic of memory," and meeting a fragile contemplative nun whom she regards as her *doppelgänger*. In Lourdes, she tells herself she's "not up to" joining in the nightly procession to the grotto, "as if something would be demanded of me personally if I went"; the next day, a waiter elicits her stammered profession of belief in God. In Rosethorn, a progressive California monastery, she seeks "the silence that speaks," and discerns mystical presence in her sudden insight about her own "contemplative" personality: "I can't help it, it's who I am." To her credit, she worries that this is just another emanation from her "knee-jerk liberal soul."

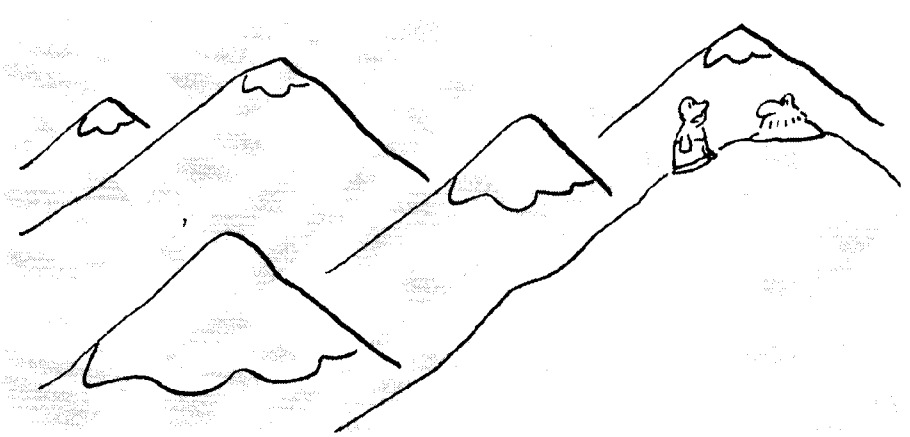
Hampl's account of a second visit to Assisi, as a member of a Franciscan study tour, is the book's strongest section. It is a deft treatment of contemporary religious manners, free of the usual symbolizing that makes every priest or nun a case study in The Church Now. There is Paul from the Bronx, the group leader, whose aloofness seems un-Franciscan: asked a question about the saint, he tells her, "I think you'll find what you're looking for in Bodo." There is Thaddeus from 31st Street, a firm believer in the worldly superiority of New York: "You're supposed to be, like, not *attached*. But then they send you to some nowhere place—Buffalo or someplace. How are you going to spiritualize *that*?" And there are the younger nuns: they are "on-the-mark analysts," but "romance, the engine that kept the whole Franciscan machine steaming down the centuries—this was absent from their intelligent, decent faces." Hampl depicts these people in their quirky individuality, and also captures their communal good feeling as Franciscans in a place where they feel at home, and feel as though St. Francis is among them.

In her eagerness to meet her companions where they are, however, Hampl willfully overlooks what they are: namely, priests and nuns in the same Roman Catholic church she left as a college girl. Most of them, she notes, had entered religious life before Vatican II and "had weathered the departures of the sixties and seventies." So why hadn't *they* departed? Hampl ventures several vague reasons. They needed a context for their spiritual lives, in which "existence was prayer." They enjoyed the community of their monasteries, each of which was "left to determine its own habits, really its own *style*" apart from odious Rome. Or they just couldn't let go: "The church, the order—these constituted the tradition they had inherited, a huge heap of ancestral home in which they lived rent-free. They stayed in this house because they were born in it.... the great ramshackle house they had always lived in and always would, no matter if it sagged and creaked, and looked as if it might collapse around their heads." The notion that their vocations might have been sustained by their faith—in Christ, and with his church—is never taken up.

This is no surprise, for Hampl has already set aside such matters of faith as irrelevant or irresolvable. "Whether God exists or not remains forever a fascination," she grants. "But God, believed in or not, remains the only elected official for the colossal job of mystery. To my mind, prayer was the real question....As the human response to this mystery, prayer, not the existence of God, is the thing to be decided." Similarly, in her account the church is not a religious body to belong to or depart from, but mystery's deputy—a fond memory and a font of hospitality for well-meaning spiritual visitors like herself.

What is the nature of God, and the character of God's revelation? Is the Christian understanding of God ultimately a put-on, or is it genuine, somehow? If the latter, what might it call forth in us? Pondering these mysteries in prayer is the life's work of the contemplatives Hampl so admires. Having set them aside herself, Hampl ends up praising praise, wondering about wonder, praying for prayerfulness, having faith in the faith of her spiritual director, a "smart little laugh that holds the world up." Who can blame her? She can't help it, it's who she is.

Virgin Time is distinguished by ardor, candor, and elegant prose. No saint, Hampl nevertheless keeps good notes. But in her willingness to sidestep the real questions of faith, even as faithful Christians sponsor her own spiritual growth, she leaves one feeling that she is little different from the pilgrims she stands apart from—a tourist regarding the holy places as settings for her portraits, going on pilgrimage mainly to confirm the impressions that she brought with her from home. □



"Uh...oh, heck—I forgot the question."

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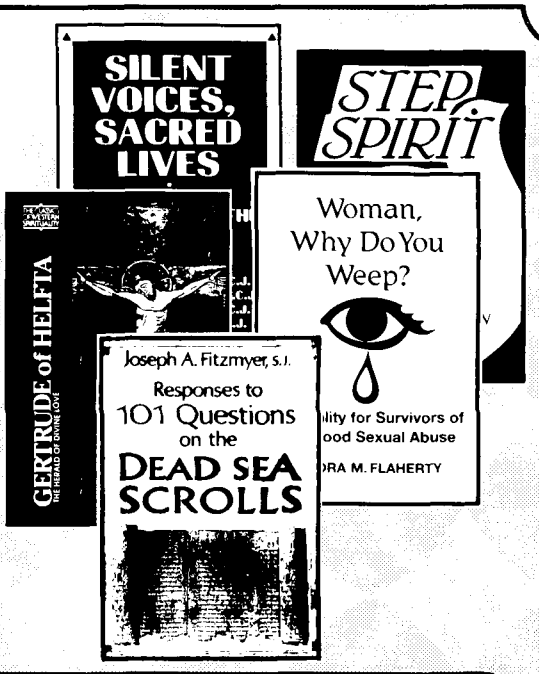
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ABRIDGING PONTIFEX MAXIMUS

DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD
The Challenge of the Christian Capitalist
Richard John Neuhaus
Doubleday, $22, 331 pp.

Rembert G. Weakland

On May 2, 1991, the day after the publication of Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, Richard John Neuhaus wrote an op-ed piece in *The Wall Street Journal* with the intriguing title, "The Pope Affirms the 'New Capitalism.'" In that piece Neuhaus argued that in this encyclical the pope strongly endorsed capitalism, not the old ruthless system, but the new humanized or modified approach, and had finally come around to the same position as the neoconservatives in the United States.

Two statements in that article caused raised eyebrows and strong rebuttals. The first was: "Capitalism is the economic corollary of the Christian understanding of man's nature and destiny." Was that asserting more than the pope intended? The second was: "The present encyclical must surely prompt a careful, and perhaps painful, rethinking of conventional wisdoms about Catholic social teaching. It may be, for instance, that the controlling assumptions of the American bishops' 1986 pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, must now be recognized as unrepresentative of the church's authoritative teaching." Were the American bishops so ill-informed? In the book the first statement is somewhat qualified by other more moderate passages like the following: "It would be a great mistake for the church to say that 'capitalism is the economics of which Christianity is the religion,'" even though the passage from the op-ed piece is repeated verbatim later on in chapter 6. To my knowledge the passage about *Economic Justice for All* is not repeated, probably because that document, in light of Neuhaus's total thesis, could now be ignored.

The present book takes the main thesis articulated briefly in the op-ed piece and develops it at greater length. The results are much more nuanced and the book contains many helpful and striking passages. Neuhaus sees *Centesimus annus* as a kind of new beginning for Catholic social teaching, in discontinuity with what went before. For this reason he labels the kind of capitalism that Pope John Paul II accepts as "new capitalism," even though this is not the terminology used by the pope himself. He is cautious, however, to call his study only "an" interpretation and not "the" interpretation of the new encyclical. Because of the newness in the encyclical, he does not find in previous papal encyclicals, even of this pontificate, the source for his own approach. Thus *Centesimus annus* is not interpreted in the light of *Laborem exercens* nor *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. Neuhaus asserts that the kind of market economy that the pope accepts comes closest to Michael Novak's concept of democratic capitalism. In fact, the author hints that Novak may have been the source of insights that caused the new perspectives.

Because of this avowed discontinuity, Neuhaus is forced to devote much space to the nature of papal teaching and to its authoritative character. These passages are most interesting and the concepts well-expressed. They form a kind of new apologetic in our day. It is unfortunate, however, that the concept of the college of bishops forms no part of Neuhaus's explanation of ordinary authoritative teaching.

One would have to admit in all honesty that there are passages in *Centesimus annus* that seem contradictory and lend credence to the Neuhaus thesis. So, for example, early in the document the pope seems to imply a strong governmental intervention when all is not functioning well: "The more that individuals are defenceless within a given society, the more they require the care and concern of others, and in particular the intervention of governmental authority" (#10). But then the pope seems to modify that concept when he talks of the "welfare state": "By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies..." (#48). By selective reading one can build several interpretations of the encyclical, especially if one accepts Neuhaus's principle of discontinuity from previous papal teaching.

However, such a discontinuous and selective reading is bound to bump into difficulties. Neuhaus states, for example, that the concept of equality is not found in the encyclical. Acting à la Sherlock Holmes, he asserts that equality is the decisive clue; it is the name of the dog that does not bark. Such a selective reading ignores #15 where the pope states that one of the roles of the state is to safeguard the prerequisites of a free economy, "which presumes a certain equality between the parties." But, as in previous papal documents on social justice, the key is inequality. It is the theme of *Sollicitudo rei socialis* and the sections of #33 and #52 in *Centesimus annus* that deal with development.

"Wait for the man with the pipe. Men with pipes know a lot about economics."

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The perils of this kind of discontinuous interpretation are seen most clearly when Neuhaus deals with the pope's exhortation to make important changes in established lifestyles. Since this sentence contradicts the thesis of the ever-expanding and limitless market that will solve all poverty problems and thus that there is no need for the rich to divest themselves of any of their wealth, Neuhaus states: "As much as we are inclined to be generous, however, honesty requires our saying that the sentence about changing 'established lifestyles' is most likely a vestigial rhetorical fragment that somehow wandered into the text and is notable chiefly for its incongruity with the argument that the pope is otherwise making." He calls this sentence "a throwaway line." To believe that Pope John Paul II was guilty of throwaway lines that are "vestigial rhetorical fragments" takes faith, indeed!

Excellent sections of the book deal with participation and especially with subsidiarity. It is unfortunate, however, that there is no clear exposition of the common good, or of such typically John Paul terms as solidarity. The section on poverty is mixed. The solution is indeed participation, but the vastness of the problem on a national and international scale seems to escape the author, because it demands more of capitalism than any form of it, even the "new capitalism," is able to deliver. Given Father Neuhaus's background, I had also expected more of the biblical section.

As an appendix to the book Father Neuhaus has printed a "condensation" (his word) of *Centesimus annus* that first appeared in *First Things*, August-September 1991. I admire the attempt to put such difficult prose into simple declarative sentences without losing the sense. It is indeed a noble attempt. Naturally one is more interested in what the condensation omitted than in what it chose to synthesize. I was not surprised to find that the sentence of John Paul II in #52 on changing the established lifestyles was omitted.

For an interpretation of the treatment of capitalism in *Centesimus annus* that is more continuous with previous papal teaching and probably more "authoritative," I refer the reader to "*Il Capitalismo nell'enciclica* Centesimus annus" in *La Civiltà Cattolica* (1991, 11, 417-430). □

THE BARD'S PRIMAL SCENE

SHAKESPEARE AND THE GODDESS OF COMPLETE BEING
Ted Hughes
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $35, 464 pp.

Frank McConnell

Reading Ted Hughes's grand, maddening, and finally un-put-downable book on Shakespeare, I kept thinking about two propositions that have echoed in my mind for years—and feeling that in a funny way I had to wait for this book to give them their final, radiant sense. The first is the argument of my old mentor and *sensei* Harold Bloom, that a "strong" poet is best served only by the creative misreadings of a strong critic. The second is something one of my first graduate students, all those years ago at Cornell, dropped in conversation: "There are two kinds of criticism—right and interesting."

Fighting words, those, especially in the current climate—chilly and overcast—of academic criticism, deconstructionist and/or new historicist, where the aim of reading great stuff (these guys, of course, would even blush to use the word "great") seems to be, mainly, to reduce the greatness to a series of tics and evasions in the service of a Eurocentric, logocentric power structure—and, coincidentally, to exalt the function of the critic over that of the creator. It's why students, shaking their heads in stunned disbelief, are walking out of English classes in droves; and they're right.

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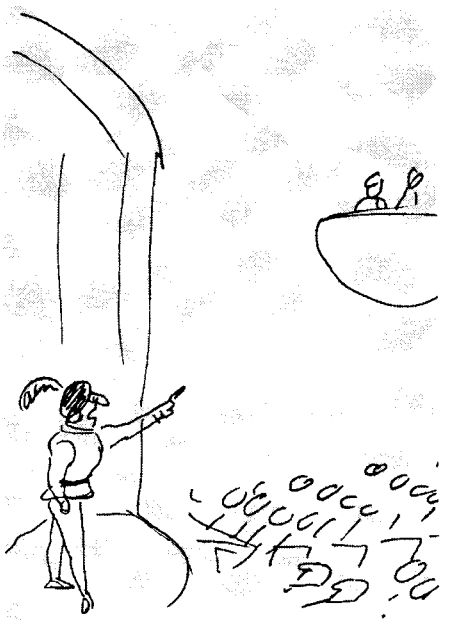
If Hughes had done nothing more—and he does much more here—his book would be of immense value just because it refutes, at the top of its voice, the currently fashionable academic treason. At the heart of his enterprise is the poet's conviction—which also ought to be the critic's—that the only reason for reading is to save your life, and that Shakespeare, perhaps above all poets, gives life most abundantly. "Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it," said one of the rabbis about Torah, and Hughes, taking Shakespeare as a kind of secular Torah, writes what is essentially a five-hundred-page midrash on that universe of language. It is the approach that unimaginative critics (like Gary Taylor) and anti-imaginative critics (like Gerald Graff) dismiss as "bardolatry"; it just happens to be, like the kids who shake their heads at Taylor, Graff, and their tribe, right.

"I shall keep reminding myself," writes Hughes in his introduction, "that the main point is to project the...plays...as a single titanic work, like an Indian epic, the same gods battling through their reincarnations, in a vast, cyclic Tragedy of Divine Love." Perhaps midrash isn't the right word. Hughes is in fact writing a Shakespearean Kabbalah, a sometimes tortuous but infallibly rich articulation of his Shakespeare, whose visionary idiosyncracy seeks not to impose itself upon our reading, but to share itself with our reading. Miraculously, it does.

Ever since his early collections, *Lupercal*, *Wodwo*, and especially the still-stunning *Crow*, Ted Hughes has been the most compelling of our mythological poets, obsessed—as all mythology and all religion is—with the fate of consciousness in a world that seems at once to give it birth, nurture it, and yet deny its highest yearning for immortality. Not surprisingly, then, his Shakespeare emerges as a particularly Hughesian fellow. *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, hereafter *SGCB*, focuses on fifteen plays—*As You Like It, All's Well that Ends Well*, the major tragedies, and the four late romances—as the "titanic work" of Shakespeare's inner quest to work out the "tragic equation" that is man's awareness of Nature as both womb and tomb of his godlike aspirations. For Hughes the cycle culminating in *The Tempest* is a giant tapestry, at once compellingly obvious and arcane, of the myth of all myths: man's struggle with the creating, sustaining, and destroying figure of the great goddess.

From Shakespeare's two long narrative poems, Hughes derives the polar versions of this history (this *ur*-story?). In "Venus and Adonis" the male rejects the blandishments of the eternal female and is destroyed for his rejection. In "The Rape of Lucrece" the male violently despoils the



"Before I kill Mercutio, I am asked to announce that there is a Volvo about to be towed away on Forty-eighth Street."

female and is humiliated for his perfidy. But—here's the trick—once you realize that both those stories *are the same story*, one the inside-out of the other, you have an infinitely variable, infinitely retellable tale about the self—the male—coming to consciousness of itself only in terms of its antagonism toward the world, everything that makes, but is not, the self—the female, the goddess. You have, in other words, the tragic equation or—though Hughes for peculiar reasons never says this—the most powerful articulation since Genesis of the myth of the Fall.

By stating the thesis this briefly, of course, I make it sound either a little bit ho-hum or a little bit crazy. In fact, it is a little bit of both (as—honest, folks—is most of Kabbalah). As one of my teachers wisely said, "At this point in history, if you've got a new idea about Shakespeare, it's wrong." It is also, as Hughes applies it to play after play, gorgeously invigorating. We may not want to see as *quite* so central to their stories Hamlet's Adonis-like rejection of Gertrude and Ophelia, or Othello's Tarquin-like destruction of Desdemona, or Lear's sublime combination of the two myths, first rejecting and brutalizing and finally transcendentally reconciling with Cordelia: but once we have been shown these aspects, and shown how, through the whole "titanic" progress of the great tragedies and the late romances, they form a consistent pattern moving from chaos to redemption, we cannot stop seeing them.

Hughes's method—I devoutly hope—will earn anger and derision from the freemasons of the inarticulate who currently populate English departments. It is the kind of mythological reading that critics like that good and mourned man Northrop Frye and, yes, Harold Bloom, provide us. (In fact, for any student who really gave a damn about literature, I'd say, "Save your tuition, read *SGCB*, Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, Bloom's *Book of J*, and then read everything else.") It is not embarrassed, detailing Shakespeare's mythmaking, to find similarities and hear echoes of his major theme in Egyptian religion, Welsh and Celtic tales, Gnostic fragments, *Gilgamesh*, and the *Odyssey*. Or even to suggest that Shakespeare may have known the neo-Platonist Giordano Bruno and been a member of Francis Bacon's circle of Rosicrucian adepts. At the last assertion, of course, the first impulse is to shake your head and say "Ted, Ted." And then, remembering the brilliance of everything else, you just smile, shrug, and say, "Okay—if you must."

Because, and I can't say this often enough, this is a book in love with its subject, and these days in the lit. crit. racket, that counts for everything. The mythic associations proliferate and finally all but overwhelm, but in the end we are left with a vision of Shakespeare that becomes a kind of coherent vision of world literature all together as a vibrant response to and clarification of essential human concerns: and isn't that what the business of reading and writing is finally about?

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Hughes, again—unlike most academic critics—is a *working* writer, and the toughness of that role also informs his reading. The "tragic equation"—a phrase he uses maybe a little too often—may seem too recondite and mystical. But Hughes also understands the central paradox and scandal of Shakespeare: that he was the most sublime of poets, and that he was also a popular entertainer with all the canniness of Fred Silverman or Don King. So the arcane Equation, Hughes keeps insisting, is not just the key to the visionary poet's inner search, but also a hell of an effective gimmick for keeping the plots boiling and the customers paying. And that because Shakespeare's moment, the moment of the emerging modern consciousness, was the perfect moment for the poet's private concerns to coincide with the public obsessions of his and our day. (I think here of Maritain's great description of Dante's genius: "innocence and luck.")

For the Adonis myth, ending in the death and rebirth of the Male, Hughes associates with the dying Catholicism of Shakespeare's England, and the Lucrece myth, ending in the suppression of the life-giving Goddess, he associates with the Protestantism that, a few years later, would end in regicide and Cromwell. The Shakespearean primal scene, he writes, is "the Tragedy of Divine Love in the fallen world of the 'Puritan' ego." And from *Lear* to *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, our lad graphed a hopeful (and still unrealized) way of reasserting the vanishing redemptivism and generosity of the earlier world—a world we are still trying to reenter.

Hughes's Shakespeare is finally not yours or mine, nor should it be. As George Steiner hauntingly said of this most remarkable man, the very words with which we seek to do him honor are his. But it is a *brilliant* "Shakespeare," and it enters into a profligately generous dialogue with the Shakespeare you and I have to find for ourselves. I can't see how anyone, reading this book, can read our most unavoidable poet the same way ever again. And if that is not, to paraphrase Matthew Arnold, the function of criticism at the present or indeed any time—well, then, I can't use it. □

THE POET'S GEOGRAPHY

BEGINNING WITH MY STREETS
Essays and Recollections
Czeslaw Milosz
translated by Madeline G. Levine
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $30, 288 pp.

PROVINCES: POEMS 1987-1991
Czeslaw Milosz
translated by the poet and Robert Hass
The Ecco Press, $19.95, 72 pp.

THE COLLECTED POEMS 1931-1987
Czeslaw Milosz
The Ecco Press, $14.95, 511 pp.

Suzanne Keen

This fall, Ecco Press reissues one of the essential books of our time, *The Collected Poems* of 1980 Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz. Born in Lithuania in 1911, educated in Wilno (Vilnius), a city with overlapping Polish and Lithuanian identities, Milosz has written in Polish while living in France, Poland, and, since 1961, California. He does not regret the decision to write in the language in which he is the best poet, nor should he, for his translators convey his vivid particularity and his range of tones with such success that I must remind myself to think of what I'm missing. Despite the loss of the Polish sounds, rhythms, formal structures, and idiomatic and cultural resonances, Milosz's poetry in translation is the real thing.

The poet Robert Hass has frequently collaborated with Milosz in translating himself, most recently in *Provinces: Poems 1987-1991*. From that volume, the poem "The Thistle, the Nettle" demonstrates how superbly these poets make English poetry from Milosz's original:

> The thistle, the nettle, the burdock,
> and belladonna
> Have a future. Theirs are wastelands
> And rusty railroad tracks, the sky,
> silence.
>
> Who shall I be for men many generations later?
> When, after the clamor of tongues,
> the award goes to silence?
>
> I was to be redeemed by the gift of
> arranging words
> But must be prepared for an earth
> without a grammar,
>
> For the thistle, the nettle, the burdock, the belladonna,
> And a small wind above them, a
> sleepy cloud, silence.

The desolate music of the lines defies the "earth without grammar" that the aging poet faces. The poet reanimates his cousin Oscar Milosz's catalog of weeds, quoted in the epigraph to the poem, making continuity out of arranged words even as he disbelieves in the efficacy of poetry's claim on the future. My own experience of vacant lots and the accidental meadows of the postindustrial landscape, not to mention the prospect of the end of the poet's vocation, is whipped into shape by this rigorous lyric.

Writing of his own translations of Robinson Jeffers in an essay collected in the new volume, *Beginning with My Streets*, Milosz concludes that "the translator sees a sort of 'empty space' in his own home, in his home of sounds and intonations that he has known since childhood, and desires that it not remain empty." It is our good fortune to have not only the works that reveal and occupy this space in excellent English versions, but also Milosz's own guide to his personal and intellectual geography. A collection of essays, interviews, reviews, and addresses, *Beginning with My Streets* makes a fascinating companion to *The Collected Poems* and to *Provinces*.

Milosz's poetry draws our attention to the amnesia of recent history regarding Central Eastern Europe, although most of the poems are invested with a piercing per-

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sonal vision that is not always obviously political. The meditations on places, people, and concepts in *Beginning with My Streets* paradoxically awaken us to the knowledge lost to the world during the half century of Milosz's experience as a writer. Always painfully aware of the partiality and incompleteness of an individual witness's account, Milosz nonetheless invests these diverse writings with a compassionate and encompassing spirit. In his Nobel Lecture, which closes *Beginning with My Streets*, Milosz asks his audience's forgiveness for "laying bare a memory like a wound." Of his responsibility to reveal the "hidden reality" that drives and eludes human reckoning, he writes, "There are moments when it seems to me that I decipher the meaning of afflictions which befell the nations of the 'other Europe,' and that meaning is to make them the bearers of memory—at the time when Europe, without an adjective, and America possess it less and less with every generation." The poet's characteristic irony rings through a statement in another essay, "On Nationalism": "It is difficult to forget what happened in Catholic Croatia during the last war, when crimes of genocide were committed in the name of religion as the only distinctive mark separating the Croats from the Orthodox Serbs." The empty space lies exposed; it was all too easy for us to forget, until we were recently reminded.

The opening essay takes off from the twelfth section of the poem "City without a Name," reprinted in its entirety in the *Collected Poems*. In the essay, Milosz compiles details of architecture, geography, and persons in a digressive map of his original territory, the city Wilno. The dialogue with Tomas Venclova brings home the importance of such remembering, for Venclova's Vilnius, "having experienced the twentieth century" is Wilno no more. The contesting claims of Poland and Lithuania and, of course, the former Soviet Union to this city result in a double or triple naming that threatens to obliterate meaning. In the poetic sequence "From the Rising of the Sun," Milosz writes, "Everything would be fine if language did not deceive us by finding different names for the same thing in different times and places." The failure of the Platonic ideal to exist immanently in all objects threatens poetry, as well:

A word should be contained in every
single thing
But it is not. So what then of my vocation?

A permanent sense of being rooted in a specific point on the globe governs and legitimates Milosz's vocation: "Even if I were gathering images of the earth from many countries on two continents, my imagination could cope with them only by assigning them to positions to the south, north, east, or west of the trees and hills of one district."

The phrase, "a sense of place," so often applied to poetry, takes on new meaning in Milosz's moral geography. In an essay on Stanislaw Vincenz's *On the Side of Memory*, Milosz concurs with the author's polemic: "The godless man can travel for many hundreds or thousands of kilometers in a single day without noticing anything that might move him, and just as space loses the value of the particular to him, so, too, does time lose value; for him, the past is obscured by a cloud of gray dust, it is reduced to vectors of motion, 'lines of development'; no inn, in which it would be pleasant to stop and rest, attracts him." Yet Milosz insists on addressing the hazards of creating, in imagination and poetry, a substitute world out of the particularities noticed by the alert person. In "The Costs of Zealousness," Milosz describes the poet's reaction to life: "Then the substitute world, which originally was a separate island, occupies more and more territory within us and the zealousness that it exacts...generates a further skewing of our day-to-day obligations toward people."

An intriguing essay called "Saligia" reveals more of the poet's self-examination, arranged around the meanings in Latin and in Polish, in youth and in adulthood, of the seven deadly sins. Here as elsewhere in Milosz's essays, he scrutinizes himself: "It is easy to understand the anger of the oppressed, the anger of slaves," he writes in the section on ire, "particularly if you yourself have lived for several years inside the skin of a subhuman. In my century, however, the anger of the privileged who are ashamed of their privilege was even louder. I am fairly well acquainted with this anger." Therein lies the sin of the successful, he warns, as "well-fed, rosy-cheeked people have often gotten entangled in duplicity when they pretended they were suffering."

A reader unfamiliar with Milosz's lively, tender, wry, self-deprecating, and often hilarious poetry might come away with a false impression of the poet from this brief description of *Beginning with My Streets*, or indeed from the volume itself. For this reason I recommend that a reading of the essays accompany an excursion into the poems, which are luckily available in both *The Collected Poems* and in *Provinces*. Here we find the work of the poet who both soars above the earth and sees it in every detail, as in these lines from "Creating the World":

To invent length, width, height,
Two times two and the force of
gravity
Would be quite enough, but on top
of it, panties
With lace, a hippopotamus, the beak
of a toucan,
A chastity belt with its terrible teeth,
A hammerhead shark, a visored helmet,
Plus time, that is, a division into was
and will be. □

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BERGER'S PROGRESS

A FAR GLORY
The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity
Peter L. Berger
Free Press, $22.95, 218 pp.

Robert Wuthnow

Take heed, theologians, social scientists, fellow travelers: Berger is back. The prose, sagacity, and insight of this new work are glorious to behold. Those who have luxuriated in Bergerian reflections over the years will not be disappointed.

It has been a while. Directing the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University has absorbed much of Berger's attention during the past decade. His *Capitalist Revolution* (1986)—a fulfilled prophecy, it appears—is his most recent previous book (not counting several edited collections). And his last book-length foray into theology—a recurring affliction, he opines in the preface—was *The Heretical Imperative*, published in 1979. Reading *A Far Glory* is thus like paying a visit to an old friend who has been away on a journey.

This is a book for seekers and nomads, of whom there are still more than a few on college campuses, in the seminaries, and in churches and synagogues. Its essential question is not so much why we continue to seek, but whether it is possible to do so seriously. The intense secularity of modern society scarcely destroys our interest in the sacred (everything from Tarot cards to televangelism tells us that). But it does foster superficiality—or at least the proverbial fear of inauthenticity. We wonder if our convictions are real. And we worry about the fact that we wonder. We want desperately to feel that our relationship to the sacred is weighty enough to hold us in place.

Reading Berger has always been a way to add gravity to the theological enterprise. With ample sprinklings of Latin and German, more than occasional references to Kierkegaard, and no hesitation in coining sociological abstractions, Bergerian prose is no feast for the fast-food addict. But there is also plenty of good humor (in both senses of the word). And if some readers come away mildly depressed with Berger's diagnosis of modern society, most will surely feel hopeful that life has meaning and that this meaning is enriched by the possibility of an embracing transcendence.

The core of the book is an extended reflection (based on Berger's William Belden Noble Lectures at Harvard University in 1991/92) on the meaning of the lapidary

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affirmation that comes at the start of the Nicene Creed, "I believe in one God." Taking issue with recent liturgical reforms in which "we believe" is asserted (a phrase that "belongs to the language of consumer behavior, not to the language of martyrdom"), Berger argues that only the "solitary believer" can truly assert her convictions in a meaningful way. The reason is that modernity has robbed us of our communities of birth, forcing us out of the cave, so to speak, into a dizzying world of choice. To assert one's belief, therefore, is to abandon fate, affirm individual freedom, and acknowledge that the social world ultimately fades to insignificance when the meaning of life is confronted.

Belief is still a fundamental requirement of living in the modern world, despite the vast growth in scientific and technological knowledge, Berger argues, because little of this knowledge actually replaces belief. Indeed, more important than the growth of knowledge has been the "pluralization of the modern social environment," a development that has undermined all taken-for-granted certitudes. The consequence for religion has often been "secularization" (as Berger has emphasized in previous works), for the truth of religious claims can no longer be grounded in taken-for-granted assumptions either. Yet there is a bright side for religion as well: faith is deepened, believers are able to shuck off tradition, making a fresh start, becoming (as Kierkegaard said) "contemporaneous" with Jesus.

The "one God" in whom the believer affirms belief, Berger says, is the mysterious other who plays hide-and-seek with humanity but who also leaves ample clues "as to where he is hiding." These are the "signals of transcendence" that Berger has discussed elsewhere. To believe in the one God is thus to affirm that the universe is open rather than closed, or perhaps better, more than the reality we can claim to know. But to suggest this of course raises the awkward fact that religious conviction also involves assumptions about the capacity to know something of this God. Here again the traces or signals of God's presence provide a convenient answer to the question of how this knowledge is possible. The world is for Berger a "sacramental universe" in which visible signs point to the reality of the invisible. And it is more consistent, in his view, to take an inclusivist orientation toward these signs than to insist on the exclusive interpretation of any single religious tradition.

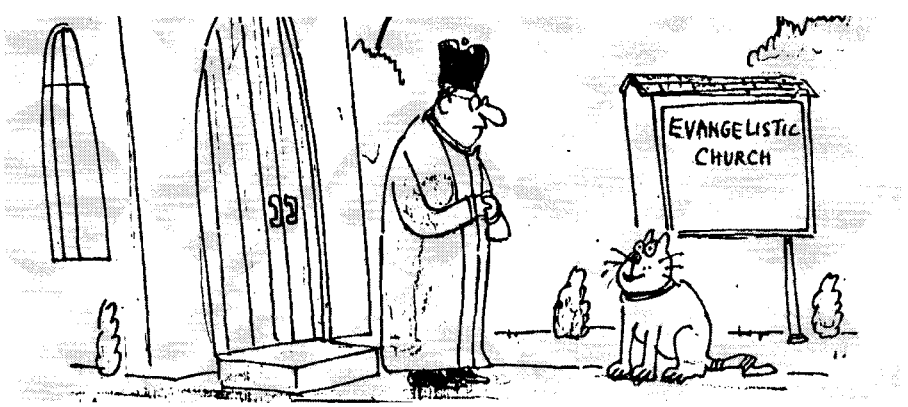
So where does that leave community? Does the solitary believer have any need to "go to church" at all? Berger says yes (although I doubt his argument will truly comfort the custodians of these institutions). We should go to church, he argues, because most of us never experience signals of transcendence in a very profound way. Instead of the blinding light on the Damascus road, we experience fleeting moments of wonder, a warm smile, a beautiful sunset. We are left with a vague sense of awe. We need an amplifier to make the signal come in stronger. So we turn to religious communities for help. They supply us with better language than we could come up with ourselves. Of course reading self-help books, attending AA meetings, or joining the Sierra Club might do the same.

But Berger also rightly recognizes that most people make their choices from the menu closest at hand. Churches survive because they are well institutionalized (we know they talk about God; we may be less sure what the Sierra Club does). And the biggest choice is no longer among denominations, but between churches in the evangelical tradition, broadly speaking, and ones in the liberal tradition. Neither, Berger admits, is likely to be very palatable to the thoughtful individual. Evangelicalism makes one feel good because of numeric growth, simple answers, and a triumphalist orientation toward the world, but offers up "a long list of hard-to-swallow propositions." Liberalism is a wasteland of debility in which "everything and anything" is discussed to the point of triviality.

Readers may of course disagree with this assessment, regarding it as overly pessimistic, if not patronizing. Berger has in fact come in for a good deal of criticism recently from fellow sociologists who argue that his orientation is "European," "old school," and out of touch with the realities of religion in America. After all, isn't the quest for spirituality as strong as ever? Don't most Americans still claim an affiliation with some religious community? Don't many attend religious services faithfully? Aren't new communities of pentecostalists, Muslims, gays, women's groups, men's groups, prayer fellowships, and Bible studies springing up everywhere? And isn't there evidence of new vitality even in mainline Protestant and Catholic churches?

Yet the Bergerian vision remains enormously valuable. Its critical perspective on American religion is less European than it is a deliberate distancing from the taken for granted. Its emphasis on modernity is not meant to be a commentary on the past decade, but on the past millennium. Confronted with the new pluralism in American religion, Berger would surely be quick to point out that he has always been interested in both the positive and negative implications of this diversity. If it encourages a shallow "marketplace" mentality, it also allows us the freedom to choose, and to revise our beliefs when they become stagnant.

Comparing the present volume with his earlier work reveals a remarkable steadfastness in Berger's vision. Early in his



"I'm on my ninth and final life, so I decided to become a born-again Christian."

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career he forged a synthesis of Weberian sociology and Heideggerian phenomenology (à la Alfred Schutz) that has provided continuing inspiration for his own work and that of an entire generation of younger social scientists. Indeed, this framework has become so familiar that the difficulty sometimes is to question its assertions rather than simply seeing how well they apply. In this sense, *A Far Glory* does not break new ground. But it is a mature work, subtle in nuance, redolent with insight. It shines with wisdom gleaned from a lifetime of reading in literature, philosophy, theology, and the social sciences. □

1987 & ALL THAT

HOLY SIEGE
The Year that Shook Catholic America
Kenneth A. Briggs
HarperSan Francisco, $27, 608 pp.

John C. Cort

The "year" that shook Catholic America, in Kenneth Briggs's subtitle, ran from August 18, 1986, to September 19, 1987—thirteen months actually. It began the day the Vatican notified Father Charles Curran that he could no longer teach theology at The Catholic University, an action that led to protest from nine past presidents of the Catholic Theological Society and the College Theological Society, signed by 750 other theologians.

It terminated the day Pope John Paul II ended his second visit to the United States.

Two weeks after the Curran action Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen announced that the pope had stripped him of five areas of responsibility and given them to a newly appointed auxiliary, Bishop Donald Wuerl. This chastisement of the highly popular Hunthausen, which Briggs describes as uncharacteristically "awkward and amateurish," led to even louder and more universal protests from Catholics both in the Seattle area and throughout the country.

A few weeks later the Vatican issued a statement on homosexuality that raised a storm among gay and lesbian groups, as might be expected, but also aroused criticism from some orthodox Catholics.

In February 1987, the Vatican defied orders from the Italian government for the arrest of Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, the American head of the Vatican Bank, for his involvement in the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano, Italy's largest. This defiance, together with the Vatican's archaic fiscal procedures, did not sit well with the U.S. public in general and in particular with the wealthy Catholics who were being asked by the pope to make up the Vatican's $53 million deficit.

In June, 1987, John Paul met with Kurt Waldheim, president of Austria and a man charged with collaborating with Hitler's massacre of the Jews. This meeting greatly embittered Jews in the U.S. and throughout the world.

At some point in 1986 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, made the statement that individual bishops had teaching authority, but national conferences of bishops did not. This curious opinion was later dispatched to the U.S. Conference of Bishops, which rejected it by a vote of 205 to 59, which is reasonable, since the Vatican position seems to be based on a new kind of math by which one times one equals one, but 200 times one equals zero.

Apparently Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope John Paul, who clearly must have approved the opinion, were becoming uneasy with the modest signs of independent thinking displayed by the American bishops. Less modest was the standing ovation that the bishops gave Archbishop Hunthausen when he appealed for their support at their meeting in November 1986. The bishops did not, however, really support Hunthausen, who protested that the process by which his authority had been stripped from him bore no resemblance to the kind of due process to which U.S. citizens are entitled. The most his sympathetic colleagues felt able to do was to strike the word "just" in the resolution describing the process and say simply that it was "in accord with general principles of church law and procedures," leaving aside, as Briggs points out, "the question of whether those principles were themselves just." Perhaps it was the ovation and this minor change that moved the Vatican, six months later, to remove Bishop Wuerl and restore the archbishop's authority.

At the same November meeting, though obscured by the smoke and fire created by the Hunthausen affair, the bishops voted 225 to 9 to approve a pastoral letter that castigated the U.S. economy for producing a degree of poverty that was "a social and moral scandal." This pastoral great-

REVIEWERS

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ly irritated the rich Catholics to whom the Vatican was appealing for financial aid, though these have now been profoundly pleased by John Paul's 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus annus.*

They must also have been pleased by the Vatican's notifying the University of Fribourg that it could not give an honorary degree to Rembert Weakland, the archbishop of Milwaukee, who headed up the committee of bishops that produced the offensive pastoral. Weakland, one of the most impressive, popular, and outspoken members of the U.S. hierarchy, thereby received chastisement that was so "awkward and amateurish" that a Vatican spokesman later—too much later—wrote that the whole thing had been a mistake and expressed "regret [for] the pain that you have suffered."

Kenneth Briggs, a Methodist himself and formerly an award-winning writer on religion for the *New York Times*, does not deal with this barbarity, but he does deal, month by month, with the items summarized above plus a host of other items and personalities of interest to American Catholics, plus vignettes about eleven Catholics with pseudonyms—including a bishop, a college president, and an aged nun—of whom we learn much more than we really want to know, for it's a long book already.

For a Methodist *Times* reporter Briggs is more evenhanded than I expected and in the fifty-odd pages he devotes to the pope's ten-day visit in September 1987, he treats John Paul very fairly and pays tribute to the pope's warmth and compassion for the poor, the sick (including AIDS victims), the old, and the young. He cannot, however, conceal his dislike of most of the positions, notably on sexual morality, taken by the pope, and especially that on homosexuality, which receives continual battering.

This is a bias that this writer does not share, having always felt that the church's and John Paul's defense of the sanctity, indissolubility, and exclusivity of heterosexual marriage was one of its, and his, most admirable features. This stems from the conviction that human nature is so tricky and so determined to do whatever it wants to do that it is essential for any kind of decent life and society that moral laws should be as absolute as possible. This means that those with a hopelessly homosexual orientation must feel that God is not treating them fairly, just as he does not seem to be treating fairly all those who for a host of other reasons do not find it possible to enjoy sexual fulfillment. Especially unfair, or course, if they do not believe in a future life where all these seeming unfairnesses are straightened out and compensated.

All that aside, one finishes Kenneth Briggs's year and his fascinating and important book in basic agreement with his conclusion that "the papal capital...[has] been pretty much depleted."

Whatever you may think of Archbishops Hunthausen and Weakland, whatever you may think of Father Charles Curran and the insistence of 110 out of 225 Catholic college presidents that the Vatican and/or the local bishop should have nothing to say about who teaches Catholic theology, another position with which I do not agree, nevertheless, the conclusion seems incontrovertible that Pope John Paul II and his current curia are living in the past, particularly with regard to "due process" and what kind of success can be expected from monarchical methods of persuasion, or coercion, in a world where democratic process and a more egalitarian jurisprudence have now swept all before them.

Christ did not found an entirely democratic church, granted, though the church of the Acts seems a good deal more democratic than anything dreamt of in the current Vatican's philosophy, but a Vicar of Christ, Pius XII, on Christmas Eve, 1944, told the world that democratic government "appears to many a postulate of nature imposed by reason itself." That is a statement to which Pope John Paul II, our many-ways admirable Holy Father, might well give some serious thought.

Perhaps it is time for Vatican Council III. □

A FIENDISH GOSPEL

LIVE FROM GOLGOTHA
Gore Vidal
Random House, $22, 232 pp.

Irving Malin

Gore Vidal has always been interested in performance and duplicity. He has, indeed, played many roles: the nineteen-year-old *wunderkind* of *Williwaw*; the sage of the inner workings of the government; the lucid, aristocratic visitor from Rome who appears often on television to attack the medium and American technology in general. If we assume that Vidal is unaware of his "acts," we are surely deceived. He is, indeed, fascinated by the ability of the performer to play different roles so well that he *seduces* the audience. We must view Vidal as a self-conscious actor of subtle roles. There is irony here. Vidal is, if you will, so brilliant that he makes us believe that he is "fake."

But I hasten to add that Vidal is certainly aware of the *nature of performance, of artistic creation.* And he is at his best when he mixes roles. Perhaps few readers remember that he was our first critic to celebrate Italo Calvino's fiction. Both writers are essentially interested in the nature of "reality"; they use low forms—science fiction, popular culture—for high ends. They play seriously; their meditations are sophisticated, subtle, subversive. Vidal is at his best when he employs "camp" for serious purposes. In *Duluth, Myra Breckinridge, Two Sisters* he *intermingles* genres; he questions, indeed, the very notion of genre—of art itself. (So, of course, does Calvino.)

I must mention a wonderful collection of essays on Vidal edited by Jay Perini (Columbia University Press, 1992). Many of these essays support my contention that Vidal has, for the better part of his long career, created odd novels which cannot be easily categorized. *Williwaw*, for example, is one of the most interesting war

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novels because of the very exclusion of epic scenes of battle, of strong leaders. War is presented "off-stage." (I think of the violence which occurs behind the "scene" in Greek tragedy.) Vidal's history cycle employs such "real" heroes (or villains) as Lincoln and Burr; at the same time his fictional characters interact with—and interpret the actions of—Lincoln. Thus we have the startling feeling that history—especially American history—is itself a fiction.

Vidal, we know, has always been abusive toward religious orthodoxy. He has attacked Christianity as a kind of comedy; and he has, of course, courted displeasure and anger. *Live from Golgotha*, like *Duluth* or *Myra Breckinridge*, is earthy, dirty, and obscene. Saint Paul is an agent of the Mossad. Jesus is fat. It is appropriate that the mockery and the lunacy begin in the very first lines: "In the beginning was the nightmare and the knife was with Saint Paul and the circumcision was a Jewish notion and definitely not mine."

But if we look closely at the lines, we recognize that there is a narrator. The narrator is dreaming. The stage is being set for a "dream-world" in which "stability" of any sort is disrupted or mutilated. And the breaks, ruptures, and mutilations continue to the point of utter rupture and farce.

The narrator tells us that he is unsure whether or not he exists. He believes that he is being manipulated by outside forces. He is "possessed," uncertain, "unreal." And in a sense he *is* right. Timothy, the narrator, *is* being controlled: "Am I possessed? Or—who am *I*? I must keep a firm grip on myself, assuming that it is mine that I now try firmly to grip." There are several games being played here. Timothy—any person in a novel—lacks flesh and blood; he is a mark on the page. Vidal uses the notion that we deceive ourselves: we cry or shriek at performances, theatrical events. He does more—he asks whether or not religion *as such* is a fantasy, a "fiction."

But Vidal cannot stop here. He questions the validity of time and space—the existence of "reality." If the Bible—or any religious text—is imperfect or incomplete, then it lacks wholeness (or holiness). It risks *misinterpretation*.

Although Vidal raises questions about the relation of word to world—of the truth of texts—he now offers the idea that every reader is a *creator*, a *judge*. And if the reader is being read—by another reader—aren't critics criticized? Aren't interpreters interpreted? Then the entire notion of "belief" is indeterminate, open, cut. Timothy, at one point, tells us—does "he" know *we* exist?—"But when I enter the past through memory I must now be extremely alert to the possibility that my recollections are being altered in ways that I cannot determine....What is truth indeed!"

I must stop here. Although Vidal offers a *fiendish* gospel—a counter-gospel—he must be taken seriously. He is, after all, asking basic epistemological questions. He turns the tables on us. Why do we believe in miracles? Do we find truth by reason or faith? Such questions are especially disturbing because they are asked in improper, shocking, indecent ways.

I suggest that Vidal's provocative, distasteful novel is, perhaps, one of his most sustained meditations on the nature of things. It will be read for many years. □

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Symbols & systems

Lawrence S. Cunningham

A few months ago I was a guest "expert" on a radio-talk show in Washington, D.C. The topic was weeping statues reported in churches in Virginia. These reports were all the more sensational since they seemed to have involved a purportedly stigmatic priest whose only other claim to fame (I do not make this up!) was a title in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the most consecutive hours spent on a roller-coaster.

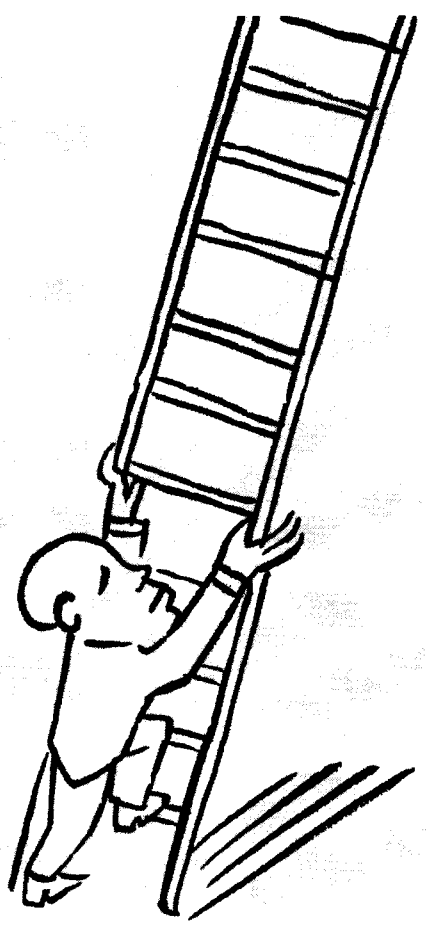
Moving Crucifixes in Modern Spain, *by William A. Christian, Jr., Princeton University Press, $24.95, 220 pp.*

The lines lit up with many folks possessed of strong opinions on the subject. One fey caller suggested that Our Lady really was weeping in the churches and her consternation had been triggered by the parlous state of Virginia's Democratic party. His tongue-in-cheek observation had at least this much truth in it: statues that move or bleed or weep, visions, apparitions, etc., tend to spring up in times of crisis or social tumult. That point is underscored in William Christian's careful study of three Spanish towns early in this century where moving crucifixes were seen and, after which, pilgrimages and devotions ensued.

Christian is a careful scholar of popular religion in Spain and this work has all the hallmarks of his earlier studies: sympathy, care with the sources, a sense of religious culture, and a resistance to any facile reductionism. One point that Christian makes may have contemporary relevance: all three "activations" (his word) of Christ came as a result of the revival of popular religious strategies that had been dormant for a long time. That point struck me forcefully as I thought of today's renewed interest in post-Tridentine forms of piety and the concurrent reporting of pious phenomena in the wake of post-Vatican II changes (not long ago I witnessed thousands of Medjugorje devotees wander the Notre Dame campus in anticipation of a big conference) of all stripes.

Those interested in popular religion and religious sociology should familiarize themselves with Christian's work. He is one of the more interesting of those historians who today are doing pioneering work in the field of popular religion. This particular book is somewhat restricted in its topic but its relevance is much wider.

Very little popular religion finds its way into Hall's history of Christian belief and practice. Starting with the post-biblical church, his book ends in the mid-fifth century with the Council of Chalcedon. Let me get my major criticism out of the way quickly so that I may go to praise its merits: there is too much doctrine and too little practice in this work. One might get the impression from this book that the beleaguered Christians of antiquity spent most of their waking hours discussing the Trinity. Hall spends precious few pages on how these people worshipped, less on their devotional life, and still less on popular religion.



Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church, *by Stuart G. Hall, Eerdmans, $22.95, 262 pp.*

Where Hall is useful, however, is in his capacity to summarize in clear prose the main theological ideas of a very complicated period inhabited by prolific and complex thinkers. This book, as he tells us, grew out of much university lecturing experience. One nice touch is that the text refers to two accessible anthologies of primary readings (i.e. *The New Eusebius* and *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies* both edited by W. H. C. Frend) which would make it possible to follow Hall's narrative while having access to the texts he discusses. It is for that reasons that this book will find a place in courses in historical theology.

This latest collection of essays by Avery Dulles will not disappoint his many readers; the essays are models of clarity, fairness, and Christian conviction. Dulles is sympathetic to, and a proponent of, "postcritical" theology. By this he means a theology which operates within an ecclesial framework, is sensitive to

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame; his* Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master *(Paulist) was recently published.*

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the life of worship, has a refined sense of the tradition, and anchors itself in the Scriptures. Such a theology, Dulles observes, begins with a "prejudice in favor of faith." Postcritical theology will resist the hermeneutics of suspicion so characteristic, say, of certain forms of liberation theology and will be less likely to engage in a polemical stance vis à vis the magisterium. In fact, Dulles, in the course of these essays, has some critical comments to offer both to the theologians and to the magisterium.

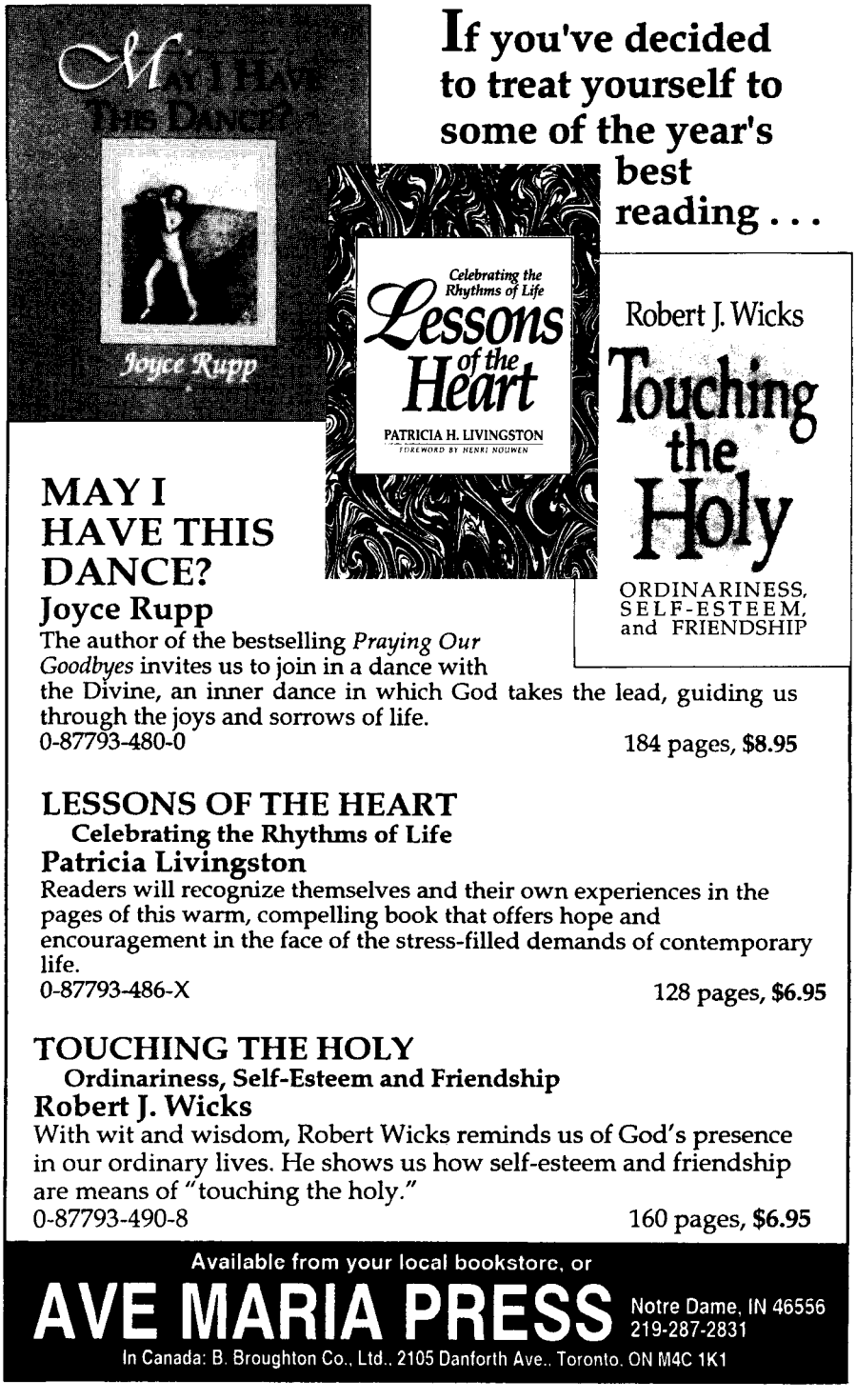
The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System, *by Avery Dulles, Crossroad, $22.50, 228 pp.*

There are twelve chapters in this book and not all are of equal depth. Dulles is superb at surveying a topic, digesting the different options and strategies, and judging them in light of his own theological position. Thus, his essay on the use of Scripture in theology is excellent as are his reflections on methodologies in theology. He is less successful on broad topics (e.g., theology and the physical sciences) which do permit more than a first glance. In general, however, in those areas where he has worked extensively (ecumenicism, apologetics, fundamental theology, etc.) Dulles is thorough and informative. Above all, Dulles is a theologian of the church and that comes across on every page.

Jeanrond's book is a serviceable survey of the history of interpretation theory (i.e. hermeneutics) and of the importance of that discipline for theology. The work is useful for taking time to show how theories of interpretation developed in the classical past; how they took shape in theological and scriptural studies in the Christian tradition; and, finally, how they became a central issue in the intellectual discussion of post-Enlightenment Europe especially, but not exclusively, in theological circles.

Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance, *by Werner G. Jeanrond, Crossroad, $22.50, 220 pp.*

After a tidy (and quite readable) historical survey that brings the story down to the usual suspects (Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Ricoeur, etc.) the author then stops to reflect on current thinking on the nature of the text, textuality, and reading in their own right. His work concludes with three meaty chapters on recent debates and the *status questionis* of theological hermeneutics today. His concluding words include an *apologia* for the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necessity of hermeneutics in theology against, I suspect, the critics who, with Rahner, feel that preoccupation with method and strategy is too like the constant sharpening of the knife without ever carving the roast.

Jeanrond rightly observes that theology not only must preserve the integrity of the Christian tradition but adopt strategies to mediate it to a world, which in our day, is increasingly pluralist and less inclined to listen. That requires a sensitivity to the way in which people receive (or do not receive) words and how they encounter (or do not encounter) texts; that requires, in short, hermeneutics. His book is both a refresher for those interested in the history of interpretation and an argument for how hermeneutics might be done. Students of theology would benefit from a reading of it.

Carlo Carretto (1910-1988) left a lay career as head of the Italy's Catholic Action movement for young people in 1954 to become a Little Brother of Jesus, a contemplative order inspired by the desert hermit and mystic, Charles de Foucauld. After ten years in the North African desert (which inspired his best-selling work on spirituality, *Letters from the Desert*), Carretto returned to Europe to work in eremitical fraternities in both France and Italy. He died on the feast of Saint Francis at a contemplative center he founded in central Italy which was open to all people who desired a period of solitude and reflection.

Letters to Dolcidia, *by Carlo Carretto, Orbis, $9.95, 224 pp.*

During his entire life as a religious, Carretto wrote faithfully to his sister who was a nun in Italy. That correspondence makes up the bulk of this little book. I found it extremely interesting for three reasons. First, Carretto was a deeply contemplative person whose reflections on the life of the gospel carry with them the ring of authenticity. Second, his witness encompasses that period after Vatican II which saw such profound changes in the church, changes which inspired in him neither fear nor reaction. Finally, Carretto had a prophetic edge to him. He could be critical without sounding like a nag or someone who was alienated from the church.

These letters do not have the spiritual heft of *Letters from the Desert* but they are of interest. They make me wish that someone will write (is writing?) a biography of this remarkable man of God since his story would not only speak of his contemplative mature years but his earlier life as an activist with ties to the higher echelons of the Catholic church.

The new edition of Brother Patrick Hart's collection of Thomas Merton's selected essays on the monastic life, for some time out of print, is a welcome opportunity to comment on the continuing interest in Thomas Merton and his writings. These essays—on a wide variety of monastic topics—testify both to Merton's keen interest in the deepest values of the Christian contemplative tradition and to his capacity to mine that tradition for practices, aids, and ideas which go well beyond the cloister. I have been reading a good deal of Merton recently and am constantly struck by how germane his ideas are for areas as seemingly disparate as ecclesiology and spirituality.

Thomas Merton: The Monastic Journey, *edited by Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O., Cistercian Publications, $12.95, 187 pp.*

This is also a good opportunity for readers of this column to be made aware of the treasure trove of materials being published by Cistercian Publications (headquartered at Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo) who not only put out materials of contemporary interest like this Merton volume but fresh translations of ancient monastic writers ranging from the desert mothers and fathers through the great Cistercian figures like Bernard of Clairvaux. With about two hundred titles in inexpensive editions, they are a precious resource for the study and practice of contemporary spirituality. They issue both primary texts and serious scholarly studies of monasticism both East and West.

Williams's book is also an updated edition of a book first published under the title *Christian Spirituality* more than a decade ago. Based on lectures he gave in England, Williams explicates the spiritual doctrine of a select number of spiritual masters from the second century down to the period of Saint John of the Cross. He deals with his chosen figures in historical order but his work is too narrowly chosen to approximate anything like that of a history of spirituality. His observations on various figures are stimulating enough. I liked his description of Aquinas under the rubric of the ecstatic. His pages on the early martyr and apostolic father, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, were quite moving. Despite its brevity and the magnitude of the topic there are some very instructive reflections in this somewhat sketchy work.

The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross, *by Rowan Williams, Cowley Publications, $12.95, 198 pp.*

My less than total enthusiasm for this book, however, is based mainly on the less than thorough way in which it was revised. For one thing, it simply will not do to ramble through a millennium and a half of Christian spirituality and, apart from a glancing paragraph on Julian of Norwich, ignore women as totally as Williams does. Some reflection on spiritual mistresses just needed to be added. Furthermore, in the updated readings, the job of revision seems half done. Williams still recommends E. A. Peers for John of the Cross, seemingly unaware of the Kavanaugh/Rodriguez edition of the *Collected Works*, and cites the Penguin versions of the English mystics despite the wonderful editions now available in the Classics of Western Spirituality. Finally, should a second printing of this book appear, Origen's name should get spelled correctly on the back cover. A little thing like that, I'm afraid, is an indication of the speed with which this "updating" was done. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

cepted promptly. It was the first time in sixty years a bishop had asked me what I thought about my place in the church.

In the meetings that were held to discuss the bishops' pastoral letter on women, I told him. At first the experience was encouraging, then depressing, and then I mostly forgot about it...until Bishop Murphy's article appeared. Thank you, Bishop, for the first paragraph of your conclusion. Let me repeat it here:

> I want to affirm the influence and enrichment brought to my own learning and to my growth as a person and as a bishop by feminist scholars and many deeply committed and gifted women. I also express profound sorrow for my own failures in communication, language, and relationships with women co-workers and friends.

I wish this passage would appear in every issue of every diocesan newspaper in the U.S. during the year 1993.

Vatican officials, according to the article, have asserted that bishops are teachers not learners. Perhaps that explains why the Administrative Council of the National Council of Catholic Bishops said, "We are hearing only from women on the fringe."

Only men who only teach and do not learn could make such a silly, sad statement. I have been a Catholic for sixty-four years; educated in the Catholic school system for thirteen years; married to a Catholic; and I have tried to follow in the faith of my Irish ancestors. I am not a woman on the fringe. The New Testament tells me that my friend Jesus is much more a fringe figure than I.

PATRICIA S. SKINNER

Write your bishop

Danbury, Conn.

To the Editors: Your editorial and the well-thought-out article by Bishop Murphy covered the new draft pastoral on women well. This pastoral is (another) big mistake by our church leadership. The process has been trampled on by the Vatican, and the letter would not coincide at all with current thinking in this country.

Sadly, this situation, along with a number of other positions taken by our leaders (e.g., recent statements limiting ecumenism; the many archaic rulings on sexual practice and marriage; the hierarchy's response to sexual misconduct by clergy; denial of rights for homosexuals; and harassment of theologians who follow their consciences), have led many lay people to take the position of Dr. Walzer in his letter to you [September 25]. Like him, I see Catholics leaving quietly, leaving embittered, or practicing faith *à la carte*. He suggests going to another church, which is better than dropping out.

But why is that all there is? The Mystical Body is all of us. Why do the vast majority let the minority in positions of power drive our church apart and ourselves out of it? It is our church; and without us it does not exist. Yet we passively go our way when we should accept our rightful roles and take action. We have been cowed to a degree of submission we would not

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL CONVERSATION

EDITED BY
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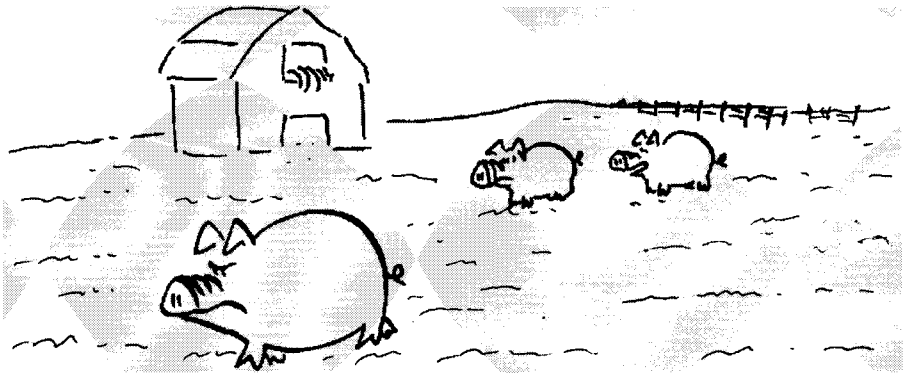

"Talk about weirdo conspiracy theories—he says the farmer is planning to kill us and eat us."

allow in other facets of our lives, to a point where we rarely speak our minds. In the early church, all were part of the deliberative process. We are part of the magisterium. Truth, especially truth that primarily involves the lay life, is not the domain of the bishops alone.

For starters, why not do something we lay people may never have thought of before (you know, something that simply isn't done). Why not write to our local bishop and tell him what we think of this pastoral, whether supportive or not. Let the bishops know what we think on the issues we care about. I doubt that Jesus would wait for the answer and then walk. He would take it on directly. He would challenge those who, "not knowing what they do," are simply entrenching themselves with eyes closed to the real world out there.

ROBERT DUBRUL

Catholics spoke out

Hyattsville, Md.

To the Editors: Dennis M. Doyle [Correspondence, August 14] criticized our report on a nationwide Gallup survey of Catholic opinion (May 5-17) commissioned by Catholics Speak Out and other church reform groups. He accused us of selectively reading the data, focusing on questions of sex, gender, and authority rather than social issues or views about Pope John Paul II. He charged us with "lumping together groups of respondents who think very differently from each other," of inaccurately using the word "revolution" to describe lay opinion vis-à-vis the hierarchy, and of portraying the bishops as a monolithic opinion bloc on church-related issues.

First of all, it is the hierarchy who have focused attention on sexuality, gender roles, and authority as "litmus" issues in our church for some time. How many Catholics know the bishops' views on national health care or the death penalty, for example, versus how many know their views on birth control and women's ordination? Our primary purpose was to test Catholic opinion on key intrachurch issues, and 80 percent of our opinion questions reflect this goal.

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Why is it surprising that our press release focused on those questions?

We also asked questions about social issues such as the death penalty, racism, military intervention, and national health care, and we reported the mixed and complex Catholic response on those issues. But when the laity dissent significantly *on issues the bishops themselves have emphasized for decades*, that's the *big* news.

Readers may judge for themselves the accuracy of our headline, "Documenting a Quiet but Massive Revolution in Catholic Opinion on Church Issues." Here are just some of our findings:

Eighty-seven percent of respondents think couples should make their own decisions on birth control; 83 percent want the bishops to approve the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS; 75 percent favor a married priesthood; 72 percent want bishops elected by the priests and people of a diocese; 70 percent believe they can, in good conscience, vote for candidates who support legal abortion; 67 percent favor the ordination of women to the priesthood (up 20 percentage points since 1985!); 52 percent believe abortion should be legal in *many* or *all* circumstances.

It was against this backdrop that we assessed the high rating our respondents gave to the pope: 84 percent believe he is "doing a good job leading the church." Clearly, this is not because they agree with his policies. We suggested that it probably has more to do with "respect for the papal office or style and personality." If Mr. Doyle has another hypothesis, it would be interesting to hear it.

Mr. Doyle says we lumped together groups with very different views. Perhaps he did not see the complete press packet, in which responses for every question were laid out without any combined categories. The Gallup Organization reviewed all our press materials prior to release—as they do with all clients—ensuring valid interpretations of the data.

Finally, Mr. Doyle says we unfairly treat the bishops as monolithic in opinion. Anyone who talks to bishops *privately* knows that some disagree with official positions on issues such as married clergy, women's ordination, and birth control. But few have made their dissent *public*. We will stop treating the bishops as a public monolith when they stop acting as a public monolith.

This Gallup survey documents the deepening crisis facing the U.S. church. But it also provides strong evidence of lay willingness to share responsibility for the life of that church if their voices are respected and hoped-for reforms begin to appear. Those who care about the church can find here a wellspring of hope on which to base actions for reform. A copy of the survey is available from Catholics Speak Out, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

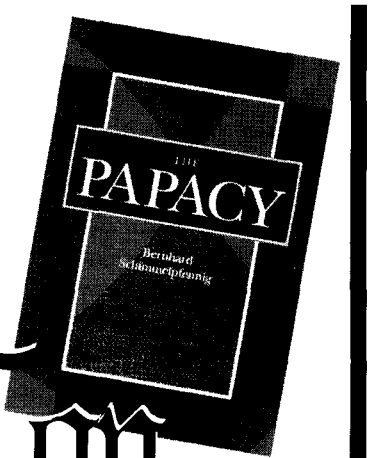
MAUREEN FIEDLER, S.L.

The writer is co-coordinator of Catholics Speak Out.

The writer replies:

It is precisely because I made use of survey data as well as the press release that I was able to uncover the distance between data and interpretation that Sister Fiedler still does not recognize. Her sincere belief in her conclusions is not enough to

A View Of the Top



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bridge the gap. In my letter I made use of the actual numbers of respondents holding various views on the morality and the legality of abortion to demonstrate how the press release lumps together groups of respondents who may think very differently.

Fiedler's blaming the Vatican for the sensationalist focus of her group's study reflects a tendency to project conclusions without adequate evidence. In fact, a reading of *Origins*, particularly of the papal documents of the past several years, reveals an overriding concern not with the "hot issues" but with evangelization, inculturation, social justice, peace, and ecology.

In my letter I expressed my sympathy with many (though not all) of the goals of the Catholic reform groups. I acknowledged the value of the study and said that significant conclusions can indeed be drawn from it. My objection concerned manipulations and exaggerations that pit the laity against the hierarchy in an unnuanced fashion. Such a divisive posture, not called for by the data, can only serve to put bishops on the defensive. Only when all of us break out of modes of attack and defense will we be able to engage in the constructive type of dialogue that will lead to positive change.

DENNIS M. DOYLE

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The Orthodox aren't

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: When John Garvey ["What the Orthodox Say," August 14] dismisses Roman primacy and infallibility, he contradicts the faith of numerous Eastern saints, including Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Theodore Studites, and even the notorious Photios himself. Nowhere will anyone find a more "Roman Catholic" statement than this one from the seventh-century Saint Maximus: "The apostolic see...from the very Incarnate Word of God and from all the holy synods of all the churches throughout the world in their sacred canons and definitions has received and possesses, in and for every thing, dominion, authority, and power to bind and loose."

Mr. Garvey reports that among Orthodox, "Peter is not seen as the first bishop of Rome or as a bishop at all." It was not always thus: The Council of Chalcedon of A.D. 451, the fourth of Orthodoxy's seven foundational ecumenical councils, records the assembled bishops' cry of "Peter has spoken through Leo" upon receipt of the doctrinal letter of Pope Saint Leo the Great. The council's letter to this pope acknowledges that he has received universal jurisdiction over the whole church from Christ himself. The Eastern bishops not only at this council but at others of their holy seven accepted the universal Roman primacy in no uncertain terms. The present-day Orthodox, who claim to love and preserve sacred tradition, in this particular essential ignore, deny, and transgress it.

Mr. Garvey entangles himself in self-contradiction when he claims that the "unity of the faith" is guaranteed by "the fact of our holding a common faith." So the faith is guaranteed by the faith? Well-known Orthodox apologist Bishop Kallistos Ware similarly ran aground at this point by maintaining that one can know that the seven councils are true because they put forth the true faith. And where is this true faith found? In the seven councils! It's all very well to say that the Holy Spirit leads one's church, but how exactly does the Spirit exercise this authority? The church's answer from the beginning, in both East and West, was through the see of Saint Peter.

As a convert from modern, anti-traditional Greek Orthodoxy to the ancient faith of both East and West, I hope that Mr. Garvey will see fit also to embrace the faith of Saint Maximus and Saint John Chrysostom, and submit to the authority of the successor of Saint Peter as established by Christ.

ROBERT SPENCER

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The author replies:

Robert Spencer reads the modern papacy back into an ancient church which revered the see of Rome but did not accord it universal jurisdiction either in matters of church administration or in doctrine. The teaching that the pope of Rome had the right to administrative power in patriarchates other than his own grew slowly and was never universally accepted, even in the West, as the conciliar and Gallican movements show. Saint Leo is still revered by the Orthodox, but (like almost all the popes) for his orthodoxy, not simply for being pope. I say "almost all the popes" because Pope Honorius I was heretical, and was condemned by a later council for having held the monothelete heresy. According to the doctrine of the papacy which Mr. Spencer apparently believes, this should not be able to happen.

It can be said that in the ancient church there was a degree of respect accorded to Rome that would make some modern Orthodox uncomfortable and a degree of disregard for the opinion of Rome that would make some modern Catholics uncomfortable. The idea that the five ancient patriarchates must be in agreement on doctrinal subjects was a common one, accepted for a while in the West as well as in the East.

A good source for much of this information is Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, volume two of his wonderful *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (University of Chicago Press, 1974). Chapter 4, "The Challenge of the Latin Church," is not happy reading for either Catholic infallibilists or Orthodox sectarians. "At the risk of oversimplification," Pelikan writes, "one might say that to the East the pope was chief bishop because he was orthodox, while to the West he was and always would be orthodox because he was chief bishop." Rome had a terrific record for orthodoxy but not an impeccable one, as Honorius shows. You can see the Roman idea of the papacy as a legitimate development from this good showing, as many Catholics do, or as a tragic departure from the conciliarism of the early church, as Orthodox do. The historical record doesn't hit you over the head with either conclusion, history being difficult that way for polemicists.

I am sorry if some sloppiness in my own writing led Mr. Spencer (who misrepresents Bishop Kallistos Ware, if in fact he has read him seriously) to believe that I or any other Orthodox think of Orthodox doctrinal agreement as a guarantee of faith, similar from the Orthodox point of view to the doctrine of papal infallibility. Infallibility, like biblical inerrancy and secular scientism, is a product of the nineteenth-century need for certainty. What I thought I had said, and meant to say, was that there is no external way to certify faith. Faith doesn't have a guarantee external to faith, and—if it is really faith—it shouldn't need to have one.

JOHN GARVEY

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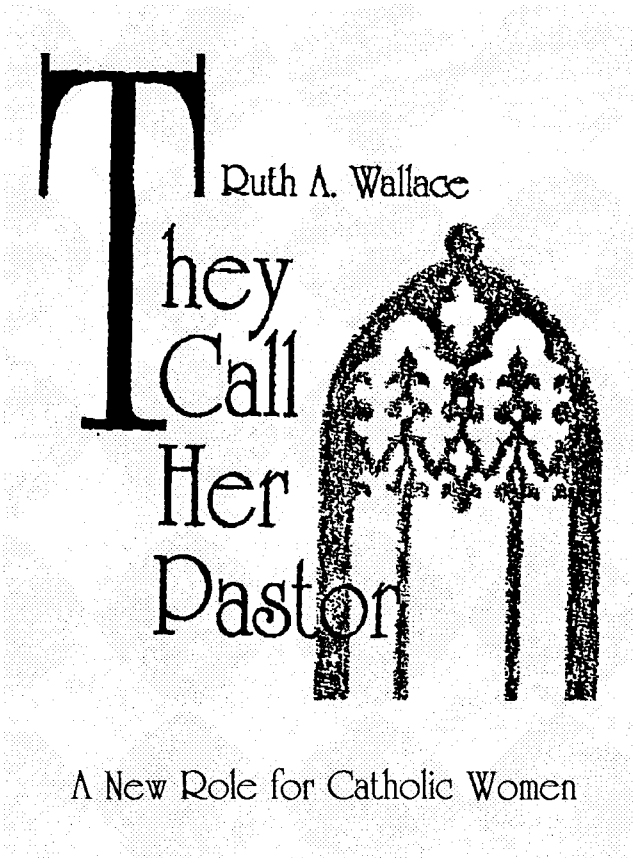

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